

THE CHURCH AS A PROFESSING COMMUNITY
AND THE PASTORS' PLACE IN IT

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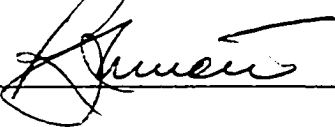
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PREFACE

My entrance into seminary, Fall 1970, roughly coincided with the universal decline of the 1960's activism. I came bearing upon my persona and my role the scars which our corporate mistakes created in that era. I remained committed to the Church's ministry, but I was confused about what that meant. I came convinced that seminary was a place for me to deal with my confused calling. Of course, I found that the Church and its reflective agency, the seminary, were struggling with aspects of the same disenchantment in the Church. This study represents a product of my own struggles with disenchantment. I believe that I have benefitted from the struggle, and I hope that this study will give insights to others who take up the challenge.

I wish to acknowledge some of the people whom I feel have made this study possible. Drs. Loren Fisher, Rolf Knierim, Hans Dieter Betz, and Ekkehard Muehlenberg have made our traditions live for me and have prompted me to look for the Kerygmatic potential in our contemporary experience. Dr. Robert Arnott has shown me how vital administration is to the Church's mission and introduced me to many challenging options. Dr. Howard Clinebell has made me sensitive to group processes. My typist, Genevieve Beenen, not only waited patiently for her work, but pastorally supported the writer.

I gratefully dedicate this work to my immediate and extended family. For they have paid immeasurable prices so that I might enter the Church's ministry. Concerning all of these people, I say with Paul, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	iii
 Chapter	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	1
Methodology	4
2 THE CHURCH AS A HUMAN ORGANIZATION: An Organizational Exploration of the Church and Its Ministry	5
3 THE CHURCH AS A PROFESSING COMMUNITY	41
"Professing" Communities	41
The Church as the Religious Professing Community	48
The "Professing" Character of All Human Communities	53
The Church as a Gospel-Professing Community and the Pastoral Overseer	68
4 NURTURING THE CHURCH'S PARTICIPATION IN THE GOSPEL STORY	78
APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 4. "READ FOR YOUR LIFE" A Handbook for Biblical Interpretation	87
Preliminary Guidelines	88
What Is the Text?	89
What Does the Text Say?	90
What Does the Text Mean for Its Own Time?	97
What Does the Text Mean for Us?	97
5. DISCIPLINING THE CHURCHES TO LIVE THE STORY OF FAITH	100
"Thy Synergists:" A Group Using Theological Case Study to Work with God	113
Disciplining the Corporate Church to Be a Gospel-Professing Community	121
6. SUMMARY	131
BIBLIOGRAPHY	136

THE CHURCH AS A PROFESSING COMMUNITY AND THE PASTORS' PLACE IN IT

This study began with the recent problem of confusion concerning the nature of the Church and its pastoral ministry. Through relevant literature we found that problem to be part of a persistently modern perplexity. We also saw the problem within the context of a radically secularizing era which has tended to reduce the Church and other human structures to their obvious aspects.

We first examined the Church and the pastoral role as mainly organizational phenomena which could be clarified by secular parallels found in sociological and managerial analyses. Then with the help of H. Richard Niebuhr, we seriously considered the Church's claims to represent a reality which is alternative to obvious reality and also divine. These claims proved to be progressively illuminating about the supposedly secular communities and the Church's relation to them.

Our analysis allowed us to make some progressive affirmations about the Church. The Church is a community, a body of people which depends upon a dynamically common mind and spirit. It is a faith-professing community whose members, orientation, and institutional structures are to be determined by its central object of trust and loyalty. It is a religious community which explicitly professes faith in a central divine reality which is other than our obvious reality. Finally, it is a Gospel-professing community whose mind, institutional structures and actions toward the world are being filled by the good news that our sovereign God is accomplishing reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

In this context, we also draw some conclusions about the pastoral role. In the Church's professing community, pastors have

a unique place of leadership, which can best be described by "pastoral oversight" or similar terms. As in voluntary associations, their leadership is "pastoral," in the sense of being supportive and enabling of an emerging consensus. Yet, they are also significant overseers of the professing community. For they continually direct the community to orient their consensus to the primacy of God's sovereignty, the authority which stands over both pastor and community. Finally they coordinate the Gospel-professing community to implement its common mind before God in fitting institutional structures and procedures.

For pastors and congregations, we gathered and adapted some strategies which are in keeping with the Church's being a Gospel-professing community. These strategies included kerygmatic exegesis of traditions in small groups, theological case study, analysis of congregational life according to resulting ministries, and a "management by objectives" adapted to the Church. These strategies and others adopted in the same light can strengthen the Church as a Gospel-professing community and can provide bases for pastors to take their position of pastoral oversight within the community.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Our concepts of Church and pastoral ministry are always important. Such concepts reflect how we understand God's salvific interaction with humanity. They also reflect how the Church may participate in God's purposes. Finally, they delimit what structures and practices are proper for the Church. Often our concepts of Church and ministry are submerged, but functionally powerful in the Church's practical operations. In our present context, it has become vital to examine our understandings of Church and ministry because they have suffered a contemporary confusion and conflict.

THE PROBLEM

In the last decade, there were shrill arguments about the nature of the Church. In this decade, one can often notice the Churches and pastors struggling with a debilitating perplexity about "Who are we and what are we supposed to do?" There is perhaps some newness in this perplexity. A great part of the people, finances, energy, friendliness, and leadership which invaded the post-World War II Church has exited. However, when one turns to the literature, one finds that such confusion is not so new. In the AATS study in the mid-1950's, H. Richard Niebuhr

pointed out that there had been confusion concerning a unifying concept of ministry from the mid-1930's up until his own time.¹ The literature continues to reflect what Niebuhr and others had noted. For Niebuhr, the Church was "confusing proximate with ultimate goals,"² and linked to that the ministry was "the perplexed profession."³

For Adams, ministers have a "diffused, generalized" role with regard to congregation and community and potentially experience "a greater diversity of role-conflict than any other vocation."⁴ Gustafson finds a "proliferation of activities" which congregations and culture expect of American clergy, though the clergy are "no longer certain what their unique function is."⁵ Glasse's introduction is entitled "Confronting the Identity Crisis of the Clergy."⁶ Hiltner speaks of a "present failure of nerve" and a need for unity in the ministry.⁷ Finally, U. T. Holmes III feels

¹H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), pp. 51-52.

²Ibid., pp. 39-41.

³Ibid., pp. 48-57.

⁴James Luther Adams, "The Social Import of the Professions," Bulletin of the American Association of Theological Schools, XXIII (June 1958), 163, 165.

⁵James M. Gustafson, "The Clergy in the United States," Daedalus, XCII (Fall 1963), 724-29, 733.

⁶James D. Glasse, Profession: Minister (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 13-20.

⁷Seward Hiltner, Ferment in the Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 8.

that congregations are engaged in "a search for purpose" and that parsons present themselves as the "stunned of the world" who need much better self-images.⁸

We might conclude that individual confusions about ministry participate in a Church-wide confusion which, at the least, spans a substantial part of the twentieth century. Further, we conclude that any attempt to clarify the pastoral role must keep in mind that the pastors' place is within the Church. By comparison and contrast, such an attempt must clarify the constitutive nature and mission of the Church and the pastors' relation to these matters. Neglect of this principle would introduce alien elements and more confusion into the Church and pastoral roles.

We have said that there is an interdependent confusion in Church and ministry without indicating the larger context of modern disenchantment. The Church's confusion is related to the radically secularizing aim of the modern world. In reaction to this context, the Church has often become caught in irrelevant isolation or suicidal accommodation.⁹ Pastors and congregations have often split over which isolation and/or accommodation to adopt. Either way, the Church has experienced and communicated less certainty

⁸Urban T. Holmes III, The Future Shape of Ministry (New York: Seabury Press, 1971), pp. 115, 139.

⁹Peter L. Berger, A Rumor of Angels (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 1-27. See his The Sacred Canopy (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), passim.

about how itself and everyday reality participate in the reality of God's sovereignty.

In light of the Church's recent malaise, we are required to reconsider old questions. In a radically secularizing era, what is the essential nature of the Church and the pastoral role? How might they function so as to fulfill their calling in a skeptical environment?

METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, we must do justice to the unique identity of the Church and ordained ministry, but must also do justice to their parallels in the secular world. We will first use sociological and managerial literature to explore the Church and its pastoral role as an example of human organization which participates in an ordinary, secular reality. Next, we assume in progressing specificity the Church's claims to participate in a more-than-obvious reality, and we support these claims' plausibility by their power to describe supposedly secular phenomena in human structures. H. Richard Niebuhr will give great assistance there. Having drawn our conclusions about the nature of the Church and its pastoral role, we will finally attempt to suggest strategies appropriate to our conclusions about congregations and pastors.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHURCH AS A HUMAN ORGANIZATION:

AN ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLORATION OF THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRY

The Church and its ministry, whatever else they are, are human phenomena which in many ways are similar to other things among human phenomena and, thus, understandable in parallel to them. Likewise, finding parallels to itself in secular experience, the Church can learn about its nature and how to handle its mission better. This chapter intends to explore an area which is very fruitful for understanding and working in the Church and its ministry: human organizations and their management by leaders and experts.

Pastors might be classified according to many positions which management studies use. They appear to perform directly the work of the organization and to do little or no supervision. Officials of local Churches or of the denominations have probably convinced them to perform and to subordinate their performance to the policies set by others in exchange for the rewards and absence of punishment which the latter control. They look more like "operative employees" than anything resembling management.¹

In other cases, pastors function under the authority of denominational officials, but are the top leaders in

¹See William G. Scott, Organization Theory (Homewood, IL: Irwin, 1967), pp. 187, 342, 351.

local Churches. If their functions as priests and spiritual guides are taken seriously, they may be considered to have special access to religious knowledge, which they could conceivably distribute or withhold. Because they have all the knowledge and experience in religious matters, their opinion is sought and followed by Church groups. They do not perform the work of the organization directly, but rather train, supervise, encourage, and discipline others who are supposed to do it. Their role looks something like a foreman, supervisor or line manager.²

Some pastors operate more confidently, freely, and with some administrative imagination. They have learned to analyze situations carefully and handle them according to the prevailing rules and customs. They are rarely involved in the direct work of the organization, but rather work through other paid staff and leaders of important committees. They carefully cultivate good relations with higher officials by operating clearly within expected limits. In effect, they function as middle management.³

Then, there are those pastors who overflow with self-confidence. In many ways, they operate the organizations smoothly, but one never knows what to expect from them. They very accurately sense what is happening in the

²Ibid., pp. 342, 350, 251, 361. See Robert A. Raines, New Life in the Church (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 141-42.

³Scott, Organization Theory, pp. 367, 373.

organizations and in the surrounding community. Timing their efforts with an amazing sense of the organizations' stability, they take creative risks towards the missions they have selected. They take pride in learning the needs of other organizations and in working with them so far as possible. They seem like members of top management.⁴

Many Churches may seem to operate largely without the pastors. Some groups make policy and other groups execute the programs. By virtue of their specialized training, the pastors assist those who request assistance for their own task-related problems. They largely fulfill this advisory position, although there are certain other things over which only they can officiate. They look like staff executives with functional authority in certain areas.⁵

Other theorists understand pastors to be professionals similar to country lawyers or doctors. They deal with a certain clientele they have established. They are radically independent while being accountable to codes of ethics and/or associations of colleagues. They guard significant matters deemed vital enough for societies to set aside some of their members. They perform standardized sets of skills which must be continually updated and creatively applied to unique situations.⁶

⁴Ibid., pp. 366-69, 373

⁵Ibid., pp. 114-16, 351, 379.

⁶See James D. Glasse, Profession: Minister, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 53, 55.

A functional approach also suggests many possible views of pastors. According to the task facing them, they choose a role response which is appropriate according to their training and experience. A pastor may see more centrality in one function and either subordinate other functions to it or neglect them. If one joins a multiple-staff Church, he will more probably assume a narrower spread over these other functions and become more obviously specialized.

All of these models are applied somewhat crudely from management theory. However, such applications are helpful insofar as the models actually influence the practice of ministry. Without even examining denominational officials and other special positions, these roles reveal many things about local pastors. Now let us continue to an analysis which is specifically applied to the official polity of the United Methodist Church.

United Methodist pastors are the administrative officers of the local Churches' Administrative Boards and an ex-officio member of all official groups.⁷ The local Administrative Board and its alter ego, the Charge Conference, are the leadership of the local Church.⁸ It has general oversight of the administration and program of the local Church.⁹ It annually establishes goals for ministries and

⁷The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: 1972 (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1973), par. 151.

⁸Ibid., pars. 145.1, 145.2, 148.1. ⁹Ibid., par. 151.

reviews the state of the Church through reports. It provides necessary personnel and budgets funds for the approved program.¹⁰

Being part of the Administrative Boards, the United Methodist pastors share in the Boards' making general programs, goals, and policies. As administrators operating in the light of policy, they must execute the specific strategies needed to follow programs and to achieve goals. In this office, their participation in all official groups allows them to represent the local Churches' total mission within the specific areas. As a representative of the Conference, they must see that all is in keeping with the denomination's Discipline.

Otherwise, the pastors minister to their communities, of which the charges' people are part, equip their charges for ministry both inside of and outside of the local congregations, and encourage participation in denominational programs. In this regard, they interpret Scripture and preach, administer sacraments, and arrange special religious meetings. They supervise the Discipline's implementation and the local Churches' programs. This includes reporting careful records and promoting and participating in denominational programs. They counsel and visit families and perform marriage and memorial services. They instruct and receive membership candidates, advise poten-

¹⁰Ibid., pars. 151.3, 151.5.

tial ministers, and promote participation in community life and ecumenical affairs.¹¹

The Churches' program and responsibilities are primarily directed toward ministry, which we could consider a type of service. The relation of U. M. pastors to this "corporation product" might instruct us about their role. In helping to shape goals and policy and to interpret their execution, U. M. pastors are part of the local congregations' upper level management. In equipping their charges for ministry and ensuring in some respects that the Churches' programs are executed, they act like supervisors. However, in ministering to the local communities alongside charge members, they function as "operative employees."

Given these last two observations, one might consider U. M. pastors to be like working supervisors, but that would imply a line authority which is missing, as in most voluntary organizations. While lacking direct authority, they do keep their specialties available to groups. Also certain functions related to the health and "productivity" of the corporate body (sacraments, receiving members, counseling, preaching) are reserved for their performance. Thus, the pastors also serve as staff with some functional authority. The types and amounts of members' contributions, the pastors' inclinations, and

¹¹Ibid., par. 350.

denominational customs will probably shape the concentration which the pastors exhibit at each function and level of authority.

Further, we need to see how the role of U. M. pastors compares and interacts with others'. For one thing, they are not the only ones who plan and/or execute specific programs for the Administrative Boards. The Council on Ministries, on which the pastors have membership, works with proposals for mission, which are subject to the Administrative Board's approval and/or revision. It also implements whatever plans are assigned to it. And in turn, the Council delegates authority to other councils, commissions, boards, historical program agencies, and task forces.¹² In these latter bodies the pastors again have membership, but not direct authority.¹³

Another way of studying the U. M. pastors' place is to understand that to which they have been ordained and how they have been assigned to their responsibilities. They are "ordained to be ministers of Word, of Sacrament, and of Order." The authorization "to equip the laity for ministry, to exercise pastoral oversight, and to administer the Discipline of the Church" is subsumed under the ministry of "Order."¹⁴ Thus, the ministries of Word and Sacrament are

¹²Ibid., par. 153.

¹³Ibid., par. 151

¹⁴Ibid., par. 309.

complementary to this authorization, but not sufficient. The function of Order evidently refers to programmed ministry performed by official groups rather than to ministries performed by individuals on their own.

The pastors are ordained by a bishop with the assistance of elders.¹⁵ They become full members of an Annual Conference,¹⁶ not of local Churches. They are annually appointed to local Churches by a bishop in consultation with the district superintendents, the Churches, and the pastors.¹⁷

Leonard Sayles has usefully analyzed lateral relationships within organizations.¹⁸ Thus, while position-holders may directly perform and/or administer in certain areas, the success of their areas and of the whole organization may depend upon how they approach matters with which they have less direct relationships. If we apply Sayles' categories of relationships, we may better be able to reconcile organizationally our accumulated observations about pastoral roles.

In a "service relationship", the pastors directly provide important functions--preaching-teaching, "priest-

¹⁵Ibid., par. 310. ¹⁶Ibid., par. 315.

¹⁷Ibid., pars. 386, 390.4, 391.1.

¹⁸Leonard R. Sayles, Managerial Behavior (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964) chaps. 3-8 as summarized in Scott, Organization Theory, pp. 378-79.

ing", marriage, counseling, receiving members, religious meetings. Through their availability throughout the work of official groups and their knowledge about group processes, religious matters, the Discipline, and the Church's work, U. M. pastors perform conventional staff functions in actively "advisory relationships." Through their dispersed presence and their reporting functions with regard to the bishop's Cabinet, the Annual Conference, and the local Administrative Boards¹⁹, the pastors have an "auditing relationship," which reinforces various levels of Church policy and mission. Administering the Discipline and using whatever influence they have, they may establish a "stabilization relationship" with local bodies such that they strongly affect the initiation of various activities.²⁰

Being administrative officers for the Administrative Boards gives another character to the pastors' membership in all official groups. In these groups, they represent the official policies and programs formulated by those Boards. I presume that pastors supervise local work and programs in the sense that they seek subgroups' motivation where necessary for the interests of the Administrative Boards. (The group heads more generally represent their groups' concerns to the Administrative Boards. Convening

¹⁹Book of Discipline, par. 350.4a.

²⁰See Scott, Organization Theory, pp. 378-79.

and facilitating the interaction of teams which have almost as much authority as they do, these chairpersons look more like working supervisors than anyone.)

In the local congregations, the U. M. pastors are dispersed throughout important areas including planning, authorizing, and executing program and policy. If exercised properly, this dispersion could have tremendous impact upon the operation of local Churches. This impact is given a propensity to operate in non-arbitrary directions. That propensity may be symbolized by the prescribed reports of their pastoral ministry, which they make annually to the Charge and Annual Conferences.²¹ The pervasive pastoral influence is in turn influenced by ministerial training, Conference membership and ordination, the Discipline, and the policies authorized by Administrative Boards and the Annual Conferences.

If the above analysis is correct, we have seen that managerial terminology is useful for understanding what U. M. pastors do and how it is possible for them to do it. The designated pastorate of the U. M. Church (and presumably of other American Churches) is a delicately balanced type of leadership. It distinctively links together the local congregation, the Administrative Board, the local boards and committees, and the denomination which, according to its vision, represents the Church universal. On one

²¹ Book of Discipline, par. 350.4a.

hand, the authority in the congregation which is set aside for the pastors has a staff-like character (restrictions on line authority). Thus, unless local bylaws and customs place pastors over paid staff, they have no direct authority to gain anyone's compliance through material rewards or deprivations. To a far-reaching extent, they must foster and rely upon a consenting compliance.²²

On the other hand, no one at the local levels participates in authority which the pastors do not also share. In principle, the pastors' salaries and locations are authorized elsewhere. The strategic dispersion of their staff-like function can give individual pastors significant impact which compensates for the direct authority which they lack. Thus, they participate in the local Administrative Boards that plan and budget the programs which guide everyone. Moreover, they represent the authority of the denomination and the authority of the Administrative Boards to the local boards and committees.

The leadership which a minister exercises in this functional matrix would seem to be best described by the term "pastoral oversight." In accord with this description, the executive, ordained person at the local Church is called "pastor" by the U. M. Discipline. Moreover, both

²² See Douglas McGregor, "The Staff Function in Human Relations," in his Leadership and Motivation (Cambridge: M I T Press, 1966), pp. 170-71 and James F. Gustafson, "The Clergy in the United States," Daedalus, XCII (Fall 1963), 729.

H. Richard Niebuhr²³ and Seward Hiltner²⁴ see the ministry to be unified by pastoral direction, general leadership, or general oversight, a particular type of administration which has managerial implications.

Of course, the fundamentally voluntary character of a Church membership is a substantial reason for the staff character of pastors' roles. Individual members retain substantial authority over their particular contributions, since they have not subordinated themselves in exchange for material rewards and absence of punishments. Conceivably, pastors could have as many staff or service relations as there are Church members, especially if the latter are highly independent or lack the ability to work together.

Lacking skill or understanding of their dispersed influence, pastors may be very ineffective. They seem to be responsible for work for which they have the wrong kind of authority. To compensate for their lack of ineffectiveness, they, like all staff people, will probably seek and accept whatever command authority they can get.²⁵ In doing so, they confuse the delicate relationship between their staff-like character and the authority of voluntary members.

²³H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), pp. 79-116.

²⁴Seward Hiltner, Ferment in the Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), pp. 8, 36.

²⁵See Sayles, Managerial Behavior as summarized in Scott, Organization Theory, p. 379.

On the other hand, many such pastors just complain, excuse themselves, and envy successful colleagues because these colleagues seem to have the necessary direct authority.

We need to find ways to support the pastors' particular organizational position, rather than exchange it for something alien. For one thing, there is important "human relations" literature which urges supervisors and bosses to foster relationships which seem more appropriate to pastors. In a marvelous article, Douglas McGregor²⁶ summarizes what new insights about human behavior imply for management.

McGregor suggests that the only difference between effective staff functions and effective line functions is that the latter have "material means" in addition to useful knowledge and skills, which the staff also has. Moreover, he warns us about the ultimate failure of seeking desired results mainly by adding or subtracting material means.²⁷ For well or ill, there exists a potentially staff-like function for anyone who desires satisfactory commitments to organizational goals.

For McGregor, the manager's world view, especially about human nature, highly influences the directions in which organizational potentiality is operated.²⁸ From be-

²⁶ McGregor, "The Staff Function," pp. 145-71.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 156-57, 170-71.

²⁸ Douglas McGregor, The Professional Manager (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 4-5, 16, 70.

havioral research such as Abraham Maslow's²⁹, he recommends his famous "Theory Y," basic managerial assumptions which he believes can lead to the greatest possible organizational effectiveness:

- (1) The expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest.
- (2)...Man will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which he is committed.
- (3) Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement.
- (4) The average human being learns, under proper conditions, not only to accept but to seek responsibility.
- (5) The capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organizational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the general population.
- (6) Under the conditions of modern industrial life, the intellectual potentialities of the average human are only partially utilized.³⁰

Obviously, this credo holds a positive view of human capabilities and attitudes and believes that organizational objectives can be successfully reached by individuals who like what they are doing. In the last assumption, McGregor decries the organizations' waste of this happy possibility. Another great misfortune may be witnessed if we substitute "Church" for "industrial" in the same assumption. One can easily imagine the opposite set of assumptions ("Theory X") and how it darkens the exercise of managerial positions.

²⁹Ibid., p. 11.

³⁰Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960) pp. 47-48. See his The Professional Manager, p. 11.

McGregor never remained idle with respect to his pet credo. He raised other assumptions which could have been added supplementally to the above list. He also expressed it in many ways which are more directly useful in the managerial behavior we are examining. For example, he gives the following list of basic approaches to desired organizational behavior:

- (1) All human behavior is directed toward the satisfaction of needs,...the resolution of complex internal and environmental forces.
- (2) From (1) it follows that the individual will change established behavior for one of two reasons: to gain increased need satisfaction or to avoid decreased need satisfaction ...as a consequence of the way he perceives the situation....(3) Therefore, if A wants change in another individual or group B, then A must effect an 'augmentation' in the possibilities of need satisfaction as B sees them or a 'reduction'.... (4) Such augmentation or reduction can induce a behavior change only if, from B's point of view, A possesses or controls means that B can use for his own need satisfaction....(5) In everyday usage...to exercise' authority is to attempt to induce a behavior change by the ever-present threat to withhold a means for another's satisfaction....(6) However, emphasis upon reduction frequently does not result in desired behavior, but rather in undesirable alternative behaviors and unexpected aggressive reactions. Even paternalistic generosity achieves poor results.³¹

As I mentioned earlier, McGregor effectively ridicules the idea of controlling significant human behavior by purely direct authority. He lays bare the inherent staff-function (limited direct authority) in the role of anyone

³¹McGregor, "The Staff Function," pp. 154-57.

who wants to influence the behavior of another. Also, he shows us the conditions of dealing adequately with this quandary. This requires a basically unselfish motivation, an understanding of what individuals both desire and avoid, and a successful communication to the individuals that the manager controls means to their desires.

Now, McGregor shares a succession of operative goals for a staff person's (A) work with anyone who has direct authority (B):

(1) A seeks to establish with B a relationship in which he is perceived as a source of possible help in solving human relations problems/B's concerns are primary./ (2) When B desires his help, A will attempt to explore thoroughly with B the latter's 'perceptual field' about the situation. At the same time, A will make clear his 'perceptual field' about his own role while he avoids making his own analysis and solution of B's problem.... (3) Together A and B will examine possible alternative approaches to the solution of the problem, seeking the solution that provides the best common means for mutual need satisfaction. (This requires the creation of a 'permissive atmosphere'--such as role playing--in which B can explore freely all possible alternatives, including any of A's resources he finds augmentive, and can exercise his own ingenuity without fear of exposing his weakness.)...(4) When B settles upon the 'best' solution, A will strive to give B whatever support he needs, while B determines for himself in practice whether the agreed-upon solution is adequate....(5) A will seek to help B gradually assume full responsibility himself for the success of the agreed-upon plan..../A combats both of their needs for B to feel dependent on A./ Along the way, A himself must have some ideas about what are healthy human relations--essen-

tial philosophy..., desirable attitudes, and necessary skills.³²

Here, McGregor shows how the achieved understanding is utilized with good timing. For me, changing "human relations" in goal (1) and in the epilogue to "ministries" makes the succession very useful for the pastors' situation. Understanding the "staff" function associated with "pastoral oversight," U. M. pastors could "equip the laity for (organized) ministry" without usurping others' authority. They would move toward being serving leaders, the leaders who use their resources to advance others' resources for the good of the whole organization.

Heretofore, we explored various occupational images to see how well they might fit pastors. With these images in mind, we examined denominational definitions from different perspectives. Finally, McGregor's descriptions of the "staff function" gave us a concept which is both conventionally organizational and highly useful for the pastors' proper power situation.

In some ways, we mislead when we emphasize McGregor's "human relations" aspects. We might get the impression that he merely "greases the works" so that arbitrary organizational goals may be achieved. As Scott says, "His work stands between and is a kind of bridge from human relations to industrial humanism."³³ He moves our

³²Ibid., pp. 163-68.

³³Scott, Organization Theory
p. 412 n. 4.

thinking towards presupposing that organizations must serve values of humanistic development and social harmony.³⁴ The work of Philip Selznick is more specific in this area.

For Selznick, institutional leaders cannot merely maintain "smooth human interaction." One must be "primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values."³⁵ The leaders' organizations (technically designed and coordinated systems) have become institutions, esteemed embodiments of social values, depositories of human idealism.³⁶ To nurture and to protect the long run existence of institutionalized values, certain elites are set aside into high level commitments to them and are given relative autonomy from defluctive forces.³⁷ Thus, by competently sustaining an unassured value, the institution has achieved a high social status. Its leaders must constantly ensure a fulfilling integrity between the social structuring of the organization and institutional policy, which is built around the choice of a value-laden mission.³⁸

To maintain the institution's distinctive character, its leaders must struggle inventively in two areas. In the first area, resourceful efforts thoroughly incarnate durable purpose into the institution. Dramatic stories may be told about its unique mission and approach. Functions crucial

³⁴Ibid., pp. 414-15.

³⁵Philip Selznick, Leadership in Administration (New York: Harper & Row, 1957) pp. 27-28.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 5, 21-22. ³⁷Ibid., pp. 120-31

³⁸Ibid., pp. 91-101, 135-40.

to the mission may be selectively revered.³⁹ In the second area, leaders strategize the institution's continuing development. They research how to exploit best the organization's assets and competence in relation to its surroundings. They project institutional needs and desires toward more satisfying values and competences.⁴⁰ At the same time, the institutional mission's integrity must be rigorously protected from corrosive compromises with the institution's environment and from retreats into the dubious safety of cloudy purposes.⁴¹ Obviously, the above understanding of institutional leadership can helpfully inform the ministry. It also allows us to examine how well pastors fit the conception of "profession."

Scott, McGregor, and Selznick⁴² leave some indications that institutional leadership, value protection, staff function, and professional commitment are importantly linked together. Certain stereotypes about what constitutes a professional might preclude the pastors, but James D. Glasse has done eye-opening work which may indicate otherwise. According to his research and reflection, the justification of someone as a professional requires proving a majority of five criteria ("the professional perspective")⁴³

³⁹Ibid., pp. 149-52.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 149, 152-54.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 143-48.

⁴²Scott, Organization Theory, p. 31. McGregor, Professional Manager, pp. 55, 138-40, 5, 23, 26f, 51. Selznick, Leadership in Administration, pp. 120-31.

⁴³Glasse, Profession: Minister, pp. 39-43.

(1) He is an educated man, master of a body of knowledge....(2) He is an expert man, master of some specific cluster of skills.... (3) He is an institutional man, relating himself to society and rendering his service through a historical social institution of which he is partly servant, partly master. ... (4) He is a responsible man, who professes to be able to act competently in situations which require his services. He is committed to practice his profession according to high standards of competence and ethics. Finally, (5) he is a dedicated man. The professional characteristically 'professes' some value for society. His dedication to the values of the profession is the ultimate basis of evaluation for his service.⁴⁴

According to Glasse, the clergy fulfill the above criteria in these ways: (1) "theology," (2) "ministry," (3) "Church," (4) Vows" (in relation "to ecclesiastical superiors, professional colleagues, and lay associates"), and (5) the value of "the increase among men of the love of God and neighbor."⁴⁵

Glasse sees important advantages in considering ministers to be professionals. In comparison to many images that are used to differentiate pastors,⁴⁶ professional criteria hold together important aspects of the ministry.⁴⁷ The criteria have recourse to secular, occupational experience without necessarily comprising the pastors' distinctiveness.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 38

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 40-41. See Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry, p. 31

⁴⁶Glasse, Profession: Minister, pp. 31-20.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 41-42. ⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 20-25, 29, 41.

Applying the professional perspective helps to define and to approach some ministerial problems because they parallel occupational problems in other professions. Glasse finds three problems that ministry shares with other professions--
"professional distance," "guilty knowledge," and
clientele.⁴⁹

Placing ministerial problems among professional problems is an impressive diagnostic tool. However, there are two ways Glasse could have made his analysis more complete and useful. First, among the professional problems he should have included his prior discussions of professionals displaced from their traditional institutions⁵⁰ and of "self-limitation" to "professional sectors," especially since he highlights them as professional troubles.⁵¹ Secondly, he should have emphasized how the problems are facets of one larger problem. In all of them, professionals face the precarious task of developing relationships which are effective for both the people and the values which they serve. This lack of a larger perspective may explain why he bogs down in a dubious discussion about which profession has the best type of clientele.⁵² Let us discuss the problems within the interrelated perspective which we have discovered.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 48-53.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 43-47.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 53-56.

As people join and practice profession, they limit themselves to providing competent services for relatively fixed areas of public need ("professional sectors"). Of course, this is largely determined by the above criteria. To be faithful to their people and to their commitment, professionals must focus on areas for which they are prepared and must avoid deflections.⁵³

Concerning self-limitation, Glasse concedes two temporary exceptions, a client's personal crisis and a public crisis related to a professional commitment.⁵⁴ However, in the first exception, he seems to miss the possibility that adequate service to clients, even in a professional's area, may require a holistic, general relationship which borrows insights from other professions.⁵⁵ In the second, he seems to submerge professionals in client relationships (where they may still be deflected) and to hinder them from creative actions which publicly furthers their unique value.

For Adams, professionals have certain responsibilities in cultural leadership; although, he neglects to limit public participation to areas where professionals are com-

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 43-45.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁵⁵ See James Luther Adams, "The Social Import of the Professions," Bulletin of the American Association of Theological Schools, XXIII (June 1958), 164.

petent.⁵⁶ In this area, Selznick includes judgement which considers both sides of the public issue. For him, leadership must protect and increase its viability both by responding with critical experience to environmental threats and by creatively adapting for new possibilities.⁵⁷

To account for professionals displaced from their traditional institutions, Glasse lets them fulfill a majority of their professional criteria,⁵⁸ probably because they are well-enough established that he had to accommodate this to his theory. Professionals and institutions and organizations who place them on their staffs just may recognize that these different settings provide relationships which better serve people who need professional help and which better spread the realization of important values. On the other hand, Glasse should have been more concerned for the autonomy necessary to prevent organizations' compromising the displaced professionals.⁵⁹

As Glasse notes, professionals need some "distance to be effective with clients and to apply their knowledge and skills without unnecessarily compromising their professions' ideals. If they are or become too personally involved with people, they can fail to give the service

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 167-68

⁵⁷Selznick, Leadership in Administration, oo, 149, 152-54.

⁵⁸Glasse, Profession: Minister, pp. 42-43.

⁵⁹Bernard Barber, "Some Problems in the Sociology of the Professions," Daedalus XCII (Fall 1963), 678-82.

needed and even wanted.⁶⁰ However, objectivity can be or can be interpreted as coldness, lack of concern, or malevolent scheming. If this happens, distance and objectivity present a real danger of destroying the trusting relationships which provide the fruitful context for professional services.

Professionals acquire potentially dangerous knowledge in their training and experience and in evolving relationship with clients.⁶¹ A doctor knows when an illness requires a wonder drug and when it only requires an expensive placebo. The lawyer probably knows a number of loopholes by which to evade laws. A minister has the potential to think about treasured traditions and experiences less than reverently than most of the laity. All three may have confidential knowledge about people who contracted syphilis from people other than their spouses. Professional knowledge and personal information are both required in establishing an effective relationship with clients. However, the relationships founded on such knowledge are highly volatile. "Guilty knowledge" can draw professionals and clients together in a conspiratory way that endangers professional ends. The threat of its dangers can also destroy all but superficial communication and, hence, hurts the professional relationship and hinders value-realization.

⁶⁰ Glasse, Profession: Minister, pp. 48-50.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 50-53.

Behind the prevalent concept of clientele lies a relationship between groups of people and professionals operating in certain defined sectors. When people of the group feel need for assistance in the sector, both they and the professional will expect the professional to assist them as much as possible. In fact, clients may pay professionals retaining fees to reinforce professional availability.

For me, the client concepts become professional problems when we consider whether they establish relationships which best support social ideals and those who need assistance with regard to these ideals. Pervading the problems of professional sectors, displaced professionals, professional distance, guilty knowledge, and clientele is a basic tendency where professionals become the center of one-to-one relationships between themselves and the people they serve. This resembles the staff services version of a radial ~~linkage~~ communication pattern. Its few communication links are very effective, but they also make the organizational communication less efficient--less satisfying to the involved individuals because they concentrate on one person.⁶² Of course, this pattern gives professionals much control over direct service encounters.

In professionals' use of centralized one-to-one relationships, the professionals' technical and rational

⁶²Selznick, Leadership in Administration, p. 36.

concerns will probably be communicated fairly effectively. However, less effectively communicated will be the need of both professionals and clients to participate actively in various relationships which promote the professed value. Historical observations support these conclusions. According to Glasse's summary of Carr-Saunders and Wilson's The Professions, traditional professions developed out of special Church functions and were secularized before the seventeenth century.⁶³ Evidently, professional values were once subsumed under a theological perspective. This probably changed as Protestantism challenged monastic orders and as the Renaissance challenged the Church's monopoly in important social services.

Up through the eighteenth century, professionals utilized the social respectability of their clerical predecessors. The subsequent ascendance of rationality and experimentally derived knowledge transferred professional emphasis to technical competence.⁶⁴ This latter development explains in many ways why professionals feel accountable to their own associations and codes. They alone would have the rational faculties to judge technical competence.

This dedication to technique best applied in one-to-one relationships is shown by the self-limitation which professionals seem to desire. More often than Glasse

⁶³Glasse, Profession: Minister, pp. 33-34.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 34-35.

admits, they minimize their relation to their sectors' social institutions and hire out to associated professionals, to other institutions, or to other organizations. However, only reluctantly will they abandon their distinctive knowledge-skill set and the "client" relationship in which that set seems to be best applied. Thus, professional services tend toward one-to-one relationships. They also tend toward routine decisions made by professionals on the basis of technical considerations, something about which Selznick warned institutional leadership.⁶⁵

When people have this potentially arbitrary control over important areas of our lives, we approach them with both deference and resentment. This emotional baggage constantly endangers the stable relational context required by professional services. Professional services are fairly effective in applying their tools. However, they may also inefficiently deny clients significantly satisfying participation in the achievement.

In speaking about the practitioner role of organizer-administrator, Glasse criticizes ministers for their lack of professionalism, for their anti-institutionalism as does Hiltner.⁶⁶ The term "institution" can refer to a

⁶⁵Selznick, Leadership in Administration, p. 36.

⁶⁶Glasse, Profession: Minister, pp. 73-74 and Hiltner, Ferment in the Ministry, p. 71.

socially significant organization.⁶⁷ From the above analysis, we can see that many professionals are institutional in mainly the first two senses.

Institutions powerfully symbolize and support professional ideals. Yet, the hospital, the court, etc., rarely embody their institutional purposes in a completely organizational sense. They function more like the physical settings and support systems for practices and relationships which are often more determinative than the institutional ideals. In these settings, very technical sets of skills are directed by professionals. A largely passive clientele receives services under the control of professionals. Institutions provide places for technical matters to be concentrated upon passive clientele. Much less frequently, they provide the settings for communities of professionals and clientele, both of which actively participate and organize on behalf of particular human ideals.

At this point, we can question the ultimate effectiveness of the client relationship which predominates professional behavior in many settings. Professionals' knowledge and skills are limited in their benefits because they are usually applied to passive clients at a time when they are preoccupied with trouble. Crowded schedules increase the tendency of professionals and those they serve

⁶⁷Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary
(Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam, 1965), p. 483.

to rely upon the restrictive relationships. Both orient toward stop-gap problem solving instead of creatively adapting relationships so as to fulfill their common ideals in more extensive ways.

Glasse does struggle for flexibility in the passive relationships, though he seems to propose one-to-one adaptations. He agrees with Fichter about the need to be creative and non-routinized about relationships.⁶⁸ He agrees with Bloom that in accord with clients' need, professional-client relationships should adjust among those of parent-infant, guidance-cooperation, and mutual participation.⁶⁹ Later he says that the minister should not pastor in this one-to-one way, but "must come to see his ministry in the structures of the church...." "His task is to establish relationships among people in the church in such a way that they enter into ministry in the world."⁷⁰

We should already understand Glasse's desire to transcend the usual professional relationships. Professionals have limited effects even on the people they directly see. Growing competence through increased education, training, and specialization make it appear that ideals are served well in client relationships. However, this growing

⁶⁸Glasse, Profession: Minister, p. 84 citing Joseph Fichter Religion as an Occupation (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), p. 164.

⁶⁹Glasse, ibid., pp. 85-86 citing Samuel W. Bloom, The Doctor and his Patient (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1963), pp. 41-42.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 93.

competence is largely applied in relationships which are separate from other relationships. The operation typically does not augment the control over professional ideals which clients already have both in other relationships and on their own.

The relationships too easily reduce to those of parent-child or guidance-cooperation. Professionals put clients through proper paces, but mainly by coincidence do clients achieve more competence to realize ideals from themselves or for those close to them. They can only recommend an appointment with the professionals they have retained.

The professional perspective's subtle danger is that professionals' technical actions within client relationships become totally identified as the significant social practices. When lay people feel that others provide for these practices and feel incompetent anyway, they neglect the practical realization of crucial ideals. The result is more and more competent professionals, but not really more health, education, etc. If the professionals condone this development, they contradict a full sense of the "institutions" they serve, their claim to be responsible, and their deep dedication to their professional ideals.

Both professionals and lay people are often reluctant to organize institutions in a way that both could work toward societal ideals. The old way is more familiar and

easier. However, wisdom would indicate that societal values will be largely honored in convenience or in emergencies unless the professionals, who have the competence, equip those they serve.

Much of the client relationship has entered into the ministry's professional practice. Perhaps the privatizing of religion and powerful modelling of other professionals has led to this. Even group functions, such as committee meetings and worship, may be pervaded by a clientele attitude. Instead of building community it increases the ties between ministers and individual members.

Fortunately, Glasse's "organized clientele"⁷¹ signifies another type of dedication to societal values. In institutionally organized congregations, all services--whether rendered individually or corporately--are subordinated to building organic groups with common dedications. Moreover, these groups zealously recommend that non-members adopt their commitments.

These latter observations point to the rich heritage of the association, especially the voluntary association. Of course, there may be a fine line between people associated to defend a precarious social value and those associated to protect dubious self-interests from environmental challenges. We are concerned with the movement which, like the professions, became more visible after the

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 53, 92-93.

Reformation. Adams says that in asserting their functions' independence from Church and state, the professional associations continued for themselves and non-vocational associations what the Church began when it asserted its function's independence from the state and culture.⁷²

As De Tocqueville noted, associations and societies have become crucial elements in secular society as they encouraged and are encouraged by democratic developments. They provide important power tools for those who find something insufficiently revered (such as the lives of animals and child laborers) and who could not affect proper authorities individually. Since they were convinced, zealous groups who directed their efforts towards causes more specific than education, health, etc., they could organize a small number of people to have a tremendous beneficial impact on societal attitudes and laws. Their continued existence depends upon their ability to convince people to donate labor and funds. Unless they become ingrown clubs which satisfy other membership interests, their voluntary foundations require them to remain true to their causes.

Since these associations generally attack specific problems that could be subsumed under one of the larger areas of professional responsibility, professionals usually

⁷²Adams, "The Social Import of the Professions," pp. 158-59.

become involved with these zealous groups.⁷³ A successful association or society will probably have at least one headquarters, where professionals and other staff do research and coordinate the otherwise voluntary operations.

As long as the associations are supported by the funds and labor of informed volunteers, their professionals are required to function in a way that keeps these volunteers (generally lay people) committed to the associations. Such commitments could well depend upon the professionals' ability to equip volunteers for a self-satisfying service to their cause. This would mean service through team units which effectively develop and mobilize native individual abilities.

Informed volunteers will naturally expect that the professionals' dedication to their cause will be informed by the continuing dialogue between the "expert" leadership and membership. Dedication to an arbitrary technical approach to the ideals is not sufficient. If the membership ceases to be informed or to be the primary financial support, this healthy dialogue will lose most of its control over the associations' development. Especially in the case of voluntary associations we find that participation of the members highly determines organization and, hence, what is required of their leadership.⁷⁴

⁷³Ibid., 167-68 and Barber, "Some Problems," p. 679.

⁷⁴Selznick, *Leadership in Administration*, p. 99.

The previous discussion intends to be applicable to local congregations and their ministers. However, their voluntary aspects developed in a parallel to secular associations. An associational concept of congregations seems to have been applied as the "Left-Wing" reformation radicalized the Protestant expectation of personal response to the Gospel.⁷⁵

Many religious groups emigrating to America were disenchanted with established and ecclesiastically dominated Churches. For a long time in this developing democratic atmosphere, the former controls were little evident and lay authority flourished. Moreover, legal disestablishment and evangelical movements buttressed the power of lay authority.⁷⁶ Thus, today pastors' positions significantly depend upon the existence and formation of lay consensus.

In summary, I have tried to deal concretely with occupational and organizational concepts which might clarify the role and position of "pastor," especially in the United

⁷⁵Adams, "The Social Import of the Professions," p. 158. See also James M. Gustafson, "The Voluntary Church: A Moral Appraisal," in D. B. Robertson (ed), Voluntary Associations (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), p. 315.

⁷⁶See James M. Gustafson, "The Church: A Community of Moral Discourse," Crane Review, VI (Winter 1964), 74-77 and his "The Clergy," pp 729-33 where he cites Sidney Mead, "The Rise of the Evangelical Conception of the Ministry in America (1607-1850)," in H. R. Niebuhr and D. D. Williams (eds.) The Ministry in Historical Perspectives (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), pp. 207-49.

Methodist Church. I have concluded that pastors exercise a particular leadership within the institution called the Church, an organization dedicated to a high mutuality among its people and toward its environment. Characteristically, this leadership of the institutional Church takes place in a local congregation.

Because these congregations function as voluntary associations which require lay consensus, pastors have much more staff-like influence than direct authority over local membership. However, pastors have other authorities--ordination, denominational stipulations, competence in knowledge and skills, and widespread ex officio presence. Through these factors, they can lead and guide voluntary congregations in a manner called "pastoral direction" or "pastoral oversight." By way of their education, expertise, institutionality, responsibility to high standards, and dedication to a significant purpose, pastors practice a profession as tempered by the peculiar demands of voluntary associations.

I feel that the perspectives applied thus far can greatly clarify the functioning of the Church and the position of pastoral leadership in it. In allowing us to compare and contrast the Church with other human structures, they help us to understand the nature of the Church and to learn new ways to accomplish its goals. However, these perspectives taken alone keep the Church and pastoral leader-

ship "earth bound." In regards to Glasse's quote of Niebuhr's understanding of the Church's purpose, they may provide ways to increase the love of neighbor, but they provide no direct help to increase the related love of God. Our next chapter must provide a bridge to overcoming this lack.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHURCH AS A PROFESSING COMMUNITY

Granting the Church's obvious character as a human organization, we remind ourselves that the Church has also intended and believed itself to be participating in a more-than-obvious reality. This intention and belief are keys to the present confusion in the Church and its pastoral leadership. Asserting an alternative reality over against any secular reality is a chronic difficulty in human history. The contemporary secular reality has been secularizing every matter into its obvious, manipulable aspects, and makes it critically difficult to assert an alternative reality at this time.¹

"PROFESSING" COMMUNITIES

This chapter intends to make plausible the Church's participation in another reality besides the common one. To do this, we first indicate the existence of other professing communities within the so-called secular reality. Like the

¹See H. Richard Niebuhr, "Back to Benedict?" Christian Century XLII (July 2, 1925), 860-61 and his "Towards a New Other Worldliness," Theology Today, I (April 1944), 78-87. See Peter L. Berger, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 154-58; The Sacred Canopy (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 105-25; and A Rumor of Angels (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 1-41.

Church, some other human communities intentionally profess a beneficial reality which is an alternative to obvious reality and/or has a precarious status in secular reality. An alternative reality is not obviously present even in its professing community. It is only provisionally present in the relationship of confidence and fidelity which its presence defines among itself and the members of the professing community.

We might consider many phenomena which, in spite of the secularizing context, point to other realities besides the obvious one. These include play, hope, humor,² the novel, drama, and other art forms, subcultures, counter cultures, and utopian experiments and communes.³ However, here we consider the human phenomena in the last chapter which we found to be so instructively parallel to the Church: Human Relations Management on its way to Industrial Humanism, Institutional Leadership, Professions, and Voluntary Associations. In the perspective of this chapter, we will not examine or reduce the Church and its ministry according to its obvious parallels to the management of human organizations. Rather, we examine these particular human phenomena in terms of the Church's claim to participate in a more-than-obvious reality.

²See Berger, A Rumor of Angels, pp. 57-65, 69-72.

³See Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Commitment and Community (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1972).

First is McGregor's human relations management which is a bridge to Industrial Humanism.⁴ In this context, we note that McGregor considered world views highly influential for managerial behavior and its results. Adapting "third force psychology," he professed Theory Y as a largely unrealized sense of reality which would be more productive and less destructive. Likewise, he denied Theory X which he took to be the more commonly held sense of human reality. Theory Y's practices alleviate mechanical aspects of organizations and make them seek the aspects of community--a common mind and spirit in service of human development.

Similar findings appear when we look at Selznick's discussion of Institutional Leadership.⁵ His whole discussion is concerned with the fact that institutions can never be satisfied with manipulating obvious, routine elements. These human organizations are giving a socially structured realization to a value which is considered necessary to, but precarious in, the everyday reality. Selznick's suggested maintenance practices foster a community atmosphere within the organizational structures. Thus, the use of dramatic stories develops a community way of thinking, a means to acting out the spirit of the institution rather than out of routinized details (bureaucracy) which can never include the most important aspects of human groups.

⁴Supra, pp. 11ff.

⁵Supra, pp. 14f.

When an institution searches for larger purposes consistent with the previous story of its community, the community's alternative sense of reality is kept alive and growing.

According to our previous analysis of professions,⁶ key values have an essential ambivalent reality within obvious reality. This ambivalence is the case in spite of the fact that they are crucial to everyday reality. The greatest problems of professions arise when their professed values are assumed to be stable parts of secular reality and are reduced in nature accordingly. Thus, relations to people and professed values become routinized in professional actions, and the repertoire of professional structures is often restricted to those which maintain this routinization. The most creative suggestions to enlarge the service of the professions place them at the service of a community spirit dedicated to their professed value. These procedures suggest that the professional should encourage an orientation of individual and cultural minds to participate actively in the realization of health, knowledge, justice, etc.

Finally, Voluntary Associations and Movements⁷ give a "counter cultural" realization to something which implies a larger reality and which they consider to be dangerously missed by the predominant cultural reality. Being a community of people who have experienced metanoia (change of

⁶Supra, pp. 15ff

⁷Supra, pp. 24ff.

world view within which minds are oriented), they evangelize for cultural metanoia. The ecology movement with all its evangelistic aspects is a recent example. Voluntary associations deteriorate when they cease to profess a necessary alternative reality to the given reality. They become ingrown clubs or interest groups which manipulate their routines in order to preserve their places in the status quo.

Therefore, these human phenomena reveal so much about the Church because they too are intended to incarnate an alternative reality. They too have difficulty when they lack a community spirit dedicated to that incarnation. Often based on insight or inspiration, they give recognition to matters which they have experienced as real yet which have precarious relationships to people and their prevalent sense of reality. Their detachments from prevalent reality--symbolic, structural, and periodically physical--and other protective mechanisms are not intended as ends in themselves. Rather they are intended to incarnate the alternative reality's plausibility deeply in the community spirit. Having this heightened realization, the professing community is better able to evangelize the prevalent reality about a larger reality without losing itself.

That these phenomena of human organization profess a faith in an alternative or precarious sense of reality also explains the troublesome but necessary relation between

experts and laity in these phenomena. Since they are dealing in a precarious realm, experts need at least the non-experts' superficial trust and consent toward themselves and their professed sense of reality. However, the presumed importance of the precarious reality actually requires a fundamental trust and loyalty. The human relations expert must work with the line manager so that the line manager understands and guides his management according to a human relations perspective of human behavior. Thus, the expert must foster the human autonomy of the manager and otherwise model human relations in his dealings with that manager.

The institutional leader must relate non-routinely to the institution's people so that they are motivated to internalize the dramatic story of the institution's purpose. Only in this way will they think and act with the spirit of the institution and not the dead letters of its rules. The expert staff in voluntary associations must inform and involve the members such that they retain the community zeal for their cause. Concerning their professed values, professionals must at least superficially sensitize the members of the culture to attitudes and attractive images of value fulfillment which promote the values professed by the community of professionals.

A professing community's cause, the distinctive sense of reality which it incarnates, requires a creatively contributing loyalty of persons and groups rather than a

passive loyalty. Thus, the non-experts should participate in that alternate reality so vividly that they act consistently with that reality and even expand it and the actions which it inspires. The experts must nurture the members' conviction that the community's cause serves the universal reality in which persons participate and provide a crucial field within which to fulfill one's personal uniqueness. The experts' indoctrination and motivating activities intend to transfer to the members the community's sense of reality and the relation of that reality to the obvious reality.

All of these aspects and techniques can be manipulative appeals to people's altruism. Yet, the community's cause may help to transform it into something more humane or even into service of the One God.⁸ Having made a public commitment, the community can be challenged to be loyal to that commitment by people who take seriously the professing aspects of human structures.

Our analysis has suggested that there are human phenomena whose essential structures depend upon professing alternative realities to the common reality. Some of these phenomena are found among human structures whose parallels to the Church are often used to reduce the Church's image

⁸See H. Richard Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture with Supplementary Essays. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 64-77, hereafter cited as Radical Monotheism.

or practice to a largely secular status. One can not prove the Church's claim that it interacts with an alternative reality, but after one recognized other professing communities, that claim has greater plausibility. As James Gustafson says, "the social processes do not fully explain the meaning of Christian life in the Church."⁹ From here we proceed a little further toward indicating the unique identity of the Church and its pastoral leadership among professing communities.

THE CHURCH AS A RELIGIOUS PROFESSING COMMUNITY

There are some key differences concerning the Church which distinguish it from the professing communities we have discussed so far. One is that like other communities related to religion, it professes confidence and active loyalty in an alternate reality which is explicitly holy and divine. Moreover, the precariousness related to these divine realities as alternatives to the obvious reality has always had a threatening reversibility. Parallel to non-religious communities, the divine alternative reality's plausibility in the common reality can be lost (the twilight or death of the gods). Alternately, though less oftenly, a

⁹James M. Gustafson, Treasure in Earthen Vessels (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. ix. See also H. Richard Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1937, 1959), pp. ix-xvi, which hereafter is cited as Kingdom of God.

"world"-shaking crisis in the community may be interpreted as the precariousness of the community's obvious reality before the divine reality.¹⁰

For the moment, then, the Church can be identified as a religious community or a professing community whose alternative reality is a divine reality. The Church and its theology have had its troubles with traffic between Christian faith and religion. Barth made this famous distinction in his introduction to Feuerbach's The Essence of Christianity.¹¹ Later Harvey Cox used Bonhoeffer's famous suggestions toward a religionless Christianity.¹² However, Peter Berger and others have recently taken back this neo-orthodox distinction.¹³

In this area, Urban T. Holmes has made some fascinating observations about Church and Ministry. He considers the purposelessness of congregations and the confusion of parsons to be based upon the Church's secularism, its adoption of a closed world-view and its lack of transcendence.¹⁴ His way out suggests a ministry that is

¹⁰See Berger, A Rumor of Angels, pp. 2-3, 47; Berger The Sacred Canopy, p. 74; and Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism, pp. 121-22.

¹¹Berger, A Rumor of Angels, p. 39.

¹²Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 241.

¹³Berger, A Rumor of Angels, pp. 39 & 101, repudiates his use of it in his earlier book, The Precarious Vision (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961).

¹⁴Urban T. Holmes III, The Future Shape of Ministry (New York: Seabury Press, 1971), pp. 115, 139, 223.

more open to God's grace, because it is liminal (not of the structures, nonsecular),...
[related to] liminality, *communitas*, grace-ful, ambiguous, open, imaginative, etc. as opposite to secularism, differentiated (e.g. job descriptions), inept, defined, closed, busy.... The original concept of the parish was as a *communitas*, the produce of a liminal existence, the temporary dwelling place, the community that is neither here nor there."¹⁵

As a religious professing community the Church and its pastoral ministry has often sold itself short in the recent past. Their critiques of hypocritical ritual and reverence have gone so far to deprive them of their openness to God's activity. As well as protesting idolatrous symbolism, they need to reopen their imaginations to symbols which can suggest God's graceful transcendence.¹⁶ Likewise clergy must be sacramental persons, representing and leading the community's incarnating the experience of Christ. They must be charismatic, appropriately symbolizing their community's detachment from this present world and its pointing this world to a more whole reality.¹⁷

This identification of the Church as a religious professing community is certainly true as far as it goes and must affect the understanding with which we approach the

¹⁵Ibid., p. 224.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 225, 227. See also H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 25, hereafter cited as Niebuhr, Church and Ministry.

¹⁷Holmes, The Future Shape of Ministry, pp. 229-30, 245-48. See also Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, pp. 89, 70.

Church and its ministry. Yet, the Church does not tarry in just any religious reality. We cannot give up the hard fought battles in Yahwism and Christianity where professing required religious critique.¹⁸ Thus, any further understanding of Church and pastoral ministry must move to a theology which takes account of both secular and religious realities as they are both affirmed and critiqued.

Our preceding analysis of the relations among social constructions of reality drew upon clarifications that have been made within the sociology of religion and the sociology of knowledge, especially those of Peter Berger and parallel thinkers, such as Michael Novak.¹⁹ Our theological proceedings could also draw upon Berger and Novak. Their insights form the sociologies of knowledge and religion are sensitive to the problems of theology and Church in a secularizing era. For example, they suggest methodologies to deal with the transcendent reality which human communities profess in spite of the prevalent and aggressive presence of secular reality. Both even make programmatic suggestions about relating to and learning from non-Western religions and cultures.

¹⁸See Berger, The Precarious Vision, passim and Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism, pp. 49-63.

¹⁹Berger, The Social Construction of Reality, The Precarious Vision, The Sacred Canopy, and A Rumor of Angels. Michael Novak, A Theology for Radical Politics (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), The Experience of Nothingness (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), and Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

Actually our preceding analysis has been looking forward to H. Richard Niebuhr, a theologian who was dealing with the transcendent and relativism long before Berger and Novak were. I appreciated Berger and Novak much more after I felt I had some sensitivity of the full range of Niebuhr's thinking. For, I believe that Niebuhr's work already implies their suggested approaches to the transcendent and perhaps even their suggestions about non-Western phenomena. (Except for Niebuhr's health at the time, his late work "The Nature of Faith" suggests that he was about ready to discuss non-Western religions.) In turn, Novak and especially Berger clarified for me the sociological presuppositions of Niebuhr.

I have concluded that Berger and Novak lately express the theological insights from which Niebuhr began and developed. Long ago Niebuhr pointed out that Christian faith has always worked best in relation to both the secular and the other, religious world.²⁰ He has already engaged theologies dealing with the threats of relativism. Through a refinement of the concept of faith, he analyzes specific relations between our constructed realities (common and religious) and God.

Niebuhr uses his analysis to clarify an understanding practice of the Christian relation to God upon which

²⁰See Niebuhr "Back to Benefict?" and "Towards a New Other Worldliness."

the Church is based and for which the pastors coordinate the Church's activities. Finally, he seems to presuppose personally a move which Berger only suggests.²¹ Beyond alleging another reality, he actually seems to participate in the particular alternative reality which the Christian Church professes, and hence, facilitates others' participation. While Novak and especially Berger are useful for preliminary presuppositions and methodological follow-ups, primarily Niebuhr will inform our theological look at Church and pastoral ministry.

THE "PROFESSING" CHARACTER OF ALL HUMAN COMMUNITIES

In the previous chapter, we provisionally adopted a secularizing standpoint in order that we might learn the organizational character of the Church and appropriate pastoral leadership. Next when we provisionally accepted the Church's claim that it professes a reality other than the obvious secular reality, we became aware that certain other human structures profess a beneficially alternative reality, of which there is only precarious knowledge in the prevalent culture. Then, knowing that the Church is one professing community among many, we were able to distinguish the Church as a religious community which explicitly professes a divine other reality.

²¹Berger, A Rumor of Angels, p. 83.

H. Richard Niebuhr reveals the dynamics of a universal phenomenon which indicates that every human structure --in activities as well as in passive attitudes or beliefs --is implicitly engaged in professing.

...we may undertake to describe a fundamental personal attitude, which, whether we call it faith or give it some other name, is apparently universal or general enough to be widely recognized. This is the attitude and action of confidence in, and fidelity to, certain realities as the sources of value and the objects of loyalty. This personal attitude or action is ambivalent; it involves reference to the value that attaches to the self and to the value toward which the self is directed. On the one hand it is trust in that which gives value to the self; on the other hand it is loyalty to what the self values. ...

.....
The counterpart of trust in the value-center is loyalty or fidelity. Trust is, as it were, the passive aspect of the faith relation. ... Loyalty or faithfulness is the active side. It values the center and seeks to enhance its power and glory. It makes that center its cause for which to live and labor. In this active faith the loyal self organizes its activities and seeks to organize its world. ...²²

Niebuhr's concept of faith gives us a deeper insight into the social constructions of reality. Persons and their communities participate in a world view of reality that has been organized out of various levels of human interaction. For there to be any personal or group unity, these world views are organized around discernible centers (principles, images, values, persons) of trust and loyalty. Professing may be more apparent in communities

²²Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism, pp. 16 & 18.

which relate to realities precarious in obvious reality. However, every world view is an alternative to the threat of chaos and to other world views. Holding such world views, human communities profess faiths, causes which organize ways of life and make life worth living.

When we spoke of explicitly professing communities before, we indicated that they have a certain zealous fervor, a tendency to attempt converting others to the sense of reality that they affirm. From what we know of the universal social structuring of reality, all communities and their individual members function in this way. This is the purpose of formal socialization structures. Moreover, communities actively socialize children and resocialize new adults simply by the fact that these potential recruits need to adopt the community's sense of reality in order to communicate with its members.

Not only do we practice a faith in a sense of reality with discernible centers. We are also subjected to competing claims of different professed faiths. Any time we converse and interact with someone, a sense of reality is professed--implicitly offered to expand or replace our own sense of reality. In fact, non-human events, which certainly affect our faith concerning reality, may also profess to us. They also may strengthen or weaken our sense of reality according to the total story of reality into which they seem to fit. In everyday experiences, most

encounters quickly find their place in the sense of reality we have inherited and adapted and we respond according to our perceived position in that reality.

Niebuhr's concept of faith also allows us to say, even in this secularizing era, that human structures are religious professing communities. They practice faiths toward the centers of their chosen realities as if those centers were divine. This follows from Niebuhr's powerful article, "Faith in Gods and in God" (1943).

...The faith we speak of in Protestantism and of which, it seems to us, the classic book of Christianity, the Bible speaks, is not intellectual assent to the truth of certain propositions, but a personal, practical trusting in, reliance on, counting upon something. ...Faith is an active thing, a committing of self that is also active, that has power or is power. ...
.....

When we inquire into this element of faith or confidence in our life as human beings we become aware of one aspect of it which may above all else be called religious, because it is related to our existence as worshipping beings.... This is the faith that life is worth living, or better, the reliance on certain centers of value as able to bestow significance and worth on our existence. ...

The universality of such religious faith is obscured for us. For one thing, we tend in highly institutionalized societies, such as our own, to confuse the reality of human processes with their institutional organization and expression. ...As the faith that life is worth living, as the reference of life to a source of meaning and value, as the practice of adoration and worship, /religion/ is common to all men. For no man lives without living for some purpose, for the glorification of some god, for the advancement of some cause. ...

Now to have faith and to have a god is one and the same thing, as it is one and the same thing to have knowledge and an object of

knowledge. When we believe that life is worth living by the same act we refer to some being which makes our life worth living. We never merely believe that life is worth living, but always think of it as made worth living by something on which we rely. And this being, whatever it be, is properly termed our god.²³

Religious professing may be more apparent in the Church and other religious communities which relate openly to deities. The centers by which common world views are organized seem to be part of obvious reality. However, even the centers of aggressively secularizing world views function as deities, as independent realities capable of giving us lives worth living. This implicit and unadmitted religious professing parallels the Biblical understanding that we do not merely live, but rather "live according to" dominant orientations.²⁴ Every human action and structure has an implicitly kerygmatic intention which proclaims that something is god or lord.

Niebuhr has used the "interpretation and response" pattern to approach particular interactions of human faiths with competing realities and "deities." Niebuhr says that this pattern is apparent in practical reactions which are sometimes occasioned by social crises and individual suffering.²⁵ We experience or anticipate so many phenomena

²³Ibid., pp. 116-19. On p. 119 Niebuhr also quotes a similar passage in Luther's Larger Catechism. See also p. 110 and his The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan, Paperbacks, 1941, 1960), pp. 56-59.

²⁴See Romans 8:5 and Matthew 6:21, 24.

²⁵H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 58-59.

which threaten the faiths which we profess toward our senses of reality and their functional deities. Niebuhr's works catalog many of these "world-shaking" matters-- baffling events, persistent problems and tensions, unmovable mountains, and unexorcisable demons. These include war, deaths, suffering of innocents, the discomfoting claim we feel for our selves and communities to have integrity among the threatening forces of diversity, our dependence on the general and particular constitution of our existences, our experiences of failures and judgements, the frustrating confusions of pluralistic views of reality, and the pain and persecutions which we give and receive.²⁶

In the face of these threats, the stories of reality which we have trusted to give us life-space often do not hold up, except as a defense against unconquered chaos. The story of ourselves in reality is relativized; it does not unify everything, unless by a destructive triumphalism. To respond to these threats, we can apparently deny the parts of our selfhoods in which these experiences compete for a sense of reality and deny some of our fellow beings who take these experiences into consideration. Alternatively, we can distrust our functional deity who apparently causes or allows so many disturbing experiences.

²⁶ Ibid., 58-60; Radical Monotheism, pp. 120-22; The Meaning of Revelation, pp. 83-95, 107; Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), pp. 234-38, 250-51.

In crises, people and communities must cope with the fact that possibilities and plans, seemingly plausible within the given faith are now blocked. Standing shorn of their everyday faith, people are forced to ask, "What is going on?" before they can act appropriately. In many cases, a people or a person emerges professing a faith and a central image that can cope more creatively with the crises that may strike.²⁷

For Niebuhr, the power of central images to structure realities and our responsive relations with them comes from beyond those realities. Reality-structuring principles, such as unity, intelligibility, and dignity, are givens which come from outside our control and often come through those who are relatively detached from existing structures of reality. As we have seen, key insights for coping with crises (new images and stories) also come as gifts and inspirations.²⁸

The transcendent power of images is crucial for Niebuhr's dynamic concept of revelation, which like "faith" and "god" have been extended to understand supposedly secular processes in the structuring of reality. Revelation is the gift of an image which is able to transform the story of reality within which we understand and act. The revela-

²⁷Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, pp. 59-61.

²⁸See Niebuhr, "Towards a New Other Worldliness", pp. 81-85.

tory image is able to integrate those threatening matters which were previously left out of understanding and to defuse the evil responses which followed from our previous imagination of reality. Our subjectivity and that which is objectively real for us is transformed with regard to this world and/or the other world. Through the image, an absolute claims our trust and loyalty for an ultimate reality in which the relative stands.²⁹

These revalatory images, whether professed to us by another community or by other experiences, have kerygmatic intentions and seem to compete for our allegiance. Our encounters with both human and non-human events profess to us a "gospel," a news about being which would make our lives worth living. Such a gospel may be like our own and bolster our own implicitly religious faith. However, it may alter our faith to be more inclusive or replace our faith because it is no longer adequate.

For Niebuhr, human communities also profess "the sovereignty of God." When he seeks out the deified value centers professed in human structures, he is in a positive sense doing theology. Although matters of value and obligation (ethics) are a common field of his investigations, he primarily subordinates them to understanding the relation of our God to the worlds of obvious reality (theology).

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 78-79 and The Meaning of Revelation pp. 80-96.

Niebuhr understands this relation in terms of the sovereignty or Kingship of God." The universally sovereign God claims radical faith in every situation, and humanity responds with faiths which approach and depart from radical faith.

Niebuhr affirms that any finite realm of thought or experience which is open to its "religious" context--its ultimate context in society and history--has a potential openness to knowledge of one infinite claim in reality: "the absolute within the relative comes to appearance...in the absolute obligation of an individual or society to follow its highest insights...."³⁰ For him, each of our acts presupposes our faith and understanding about the whole story of reality. We also seek knowledge with a universal intent, with an intent to understand reality as would an other generalized from the universe and from all time.³¹ This quest for some degree of trustworthy unity and integrity may operate toward a this-worldly realm (culture) or completely toward an other-worldly realm (piety, personal relations with divine powers) or toward

³⁰H. Richard Niebuhr, Moral Relativism and the Christian Ethic (published as a pamphlet by the International Missionary Council, 1929), p. 9 as cited in James W. Fowler, To See the Kingdom (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974) p. 50. See also Niebuhr's The Responsible Self, p. 109.

³¹Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, pp. 85, 124.

both.³² Thus, among the many we presuppose one power, which for Niebuhr is a presupposed conviction of God's sovereignty.³³

The prevenience and immediacy of God's universal claim among other claims seems to be a persistent given in Niebuhr's experience and thinking. When he discusses the early 1930's as the decisively formative period for his convictions and theological formulations, he says:

...The fundamental certainty given to me then was that of God's sovereignty. ...Since I came to that conviction or since it came to me, I have worked considerably at the problem of the nature and meaning of 'value' and at efforts to understand the basic relation of the self to that on which it is absolutely dependent. But the old theological phrase, "the sovereignty of God," indicates what for me is fundamental.³⁴

Hence, when he explores how human faiths profess central values which function as deities, he is in part affirming that these human faiths implicitly profess the one sovereign God.

³²Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism, pp. 49-88; The Meaning of Revelation, pp. 60-71; "Towards a New Other Worldliness," passim; and his "Religious Realism in the Twentieth Century," in D. C. Macintosh (ed.) Religious Realism (New York: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 413-28, hereafter cited as "Religious Realism."

³³Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, p. 175.

³⁴H. Richard Niebuhr, "How My Mind Has Changed," in H. E. Fey (ed.) How My Mind Has Changed (Cleveland: World, 1961) pp. 71-72.

Niebuhr presupposes and sometimes indicates that God's absolute claim comes to every human structure. He also witnesses that humanity in all of its fragmented faiths (secular cultures and explicitly religious sects) in fact responds with an implicit love of God and neighboring beings. For the community of faith loves (trusts and keeps loyalty to) its center of value who is "God" for it and who points to the sovereignty of God. Likewise, each community loves the benevolent neighbors that they have before their "God".³⁵

In accordance with the dynamic relation between God's claim and the responses or variously constructed "worlds" of reality, Niebuhr uses a confessional theology. By this, he means that the relation between God and world (theology) in any particular situation is best understood by speaking from one's own perspective upon the absolute (faith) and also by seriously listening to any other point of view in openness to what is ultimate for it. Niebuhr's confessional mode respectfully and actively listens for an understanding of every faith (trusting loyalty in a sense of reality as characterized by central orientations), whether or not it explicitly mentions God. To a certain extent, this listening has a principle of "fairness in communication," of hearing something in its integrity before

³⁵Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism, pp. 34, 118, 121, and his Christ and Culture, p. x.

one places it positively or negatively in another framework.³⁶

More to the point, since every view of reality is under the governance of God, each is pertinent for our understanding and responding to the unpredictable fulness of God. This applies not only to explicitly religious views of reality, but also to common, secular views.³⁷ Thus, Niebuhr constantly affirms how theologies and other stories about the framework of reality are revealing about God's reality and hence point to the fulness of God's claim.³⁸

According to Niebuhr, human communities (including the Church sometimes) also profess enmity towards God's sovereign realm as much as they profess faith and love. To a certain extent, we can appreciate the openness and responsiveness of socially structured realities to adopt to God's sovereign claims. However, an implicit knowledge of God's claim that comes upon us through this or the other world is about as far as finite thought or experience can go on its own. In fact there is pressure to back away from this one infinite claim (into egoism, pluralism, or faith in a social center) because we know not whether this One works

³⁶See Niebuhr, Kingdom of God, pp. 12-15.

³⁷See Romans 1:19-20 & 2:14-16.

³⁸Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, pp. 238, 224; The Meaning of Revelation, pp. 62-66; Radical Monotheism, pp. 64-77, 78-89, 131-36; and Church and Ministry, p. 26

for the good of those who are related through it.³⁹

For Niebuhr, "the religious concept of sin always involves the idea of disloyalty, not of disloyalty in general but of disloyalty to the true God, to the only trustworthy and wholly lovable reality. Sin is the failure to worship God as God. ...to make a god of the self, or of the class, or of the nation, or of the phallus, or of mankind, is to organize life around one of these centers and to draw it away from its true center; hence in a unified world, it is to wage war against God. ... Idolatry leads inevitably to polytheism and polytheism is conflict. ...The moral consequences of sin--man's inhumanity to man, cruelty to beasts, exploitation of nature, abuse of sex, greed, commercial profanation of creation and its beauty--these are no less patent."⁴⁰

In our structured realities, we may implicitly love God and neighbors. However, this love is sinfully incomplete and lacking both toward God and neighboring beings, and we cannot increase it ourselves. Both humanity's brokenness and its hope for wholeness are seen as its being humanity-before-God.⁴¹

Throughout his writings, Niebuhr suggests that "Earth is not enough," that whatever we control in secular or religious faiths has never been satisfying or sufficient. We must work with the sovereign other, who is completely independent of us, but also very much professed to us in our experiences.⁴² Again for Niebuhr, the universally

³⁹Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, pp. 142, 175 and Church and Ministry, p. 37.

⁴⁰H. Richard Niebuhr, "Man the Sinner," Journal of Religion XV (1935), 276-79. See also his The Responsible Self, pp. 137-42 and Romans 14:23.

⁴¹Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, pp. 76-79.

⁴²Niebuhr, "Towards a New Other Worldliness," passim and his "Religious Realism," p. 428.

sovereign God claims radical faith. God claims our trust that he is utterly faithful to us among all reality and claims an inseparably responsive loyalty to him and to the universal community of being to which he is loyal.⁴³ As our relative views are shown in their destructive incompleteness, we may meet the sovereign who may be our friend because he is enemy of all our betrayals.⁴⁴

Niebuhr may speak generally of the other who is revealed in our experience as serving us in his independence. Thus, he points to an unconditional identity known to us in stories about a particular relation to humanity that makes a total claim on all and that opens closed-up human realities to the universe. He may use Whitehead's terms for the religious given the great void and enemy that may be the great friend.⁴⁵ However, he rarely continues without identifying who it is for him that is revealed in an image that upsets our realities and which signals a specific religious given.

⁴³H. Richard Niebuhr, "On the Nature of Faith," in Sidney Hook (ed.) Religious Experience and Truth (New York: New York University Press, 1961), pp. 98-100 and his Radical Monotheism pp. 33-34, 37, 42, 46-48.

⁴⁴H. Richard Niebuhr, "Theology in a Time of Disillusionment," Alumni Lecture, Yale, 1931 (handwritten) pp. 16-19 as cited in Fowler, To See the Kingdom, pp. 60, 64-65 and hereafter cited as "Disillusionment." See also his Christ and Culture, p. 238 and Radical Monotheism pp. 122-24.

⁴⁵Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism, pp. 123-24; Kingdom of God, p. 192; The Responsible Self, pp. 142-43; and "Disillusionment" as cited in Fowler, To See the Kingdom, pp. 60, 64-65.

Niebuhr points to "the one faithful person in the multiplicity of events,"⁴⁶ the living "I am" who is known by the names Yahweh and Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. Revelation is not just an image of a new reality which serves us and all relativities. In it, we encounter the Person who incarnated radical faith toward all being within the interactions of Israel, of the early Church, and of the faithful of all ages and who is able to convert us to radical faith.⁴⁷

Jesus Christ is God's most faithful incarnation. We could not know the fullest sense of what we do or experience without him. We could not know or respond to the infinite and contemporary God without the reality incarnated in him. In him God gives the concrete image to transform our limited trusts and loyalties, our limited gods, and our limited neighborhoods.⁴⁸ Through Christ we know what God would make of us as he constantly overturns our ingrown realities, and we know of the radical faith he expects of us in the meantime.⁴⁹ His life, death, and resurrection can convince us that the One who is the Source

⁴⁶Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism, p. 47.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 42-48.

⁴⁸Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation, pp. 9-11, 113; Kingdom of God, pp. 51, 90; Radical Monotheism, p. 42.

⁴⁹Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation, pp. 113, 139; Christ and Culture, pp. 27-29; The Responsible Self, pp. 163-67.

of all is also faithful to us all.⁵⁰ This living image is above all the Gospel which is professed to us in our experience and which we are called to profess for ourselves.

THE CHURCH AS A GOSPEL-PROFESSING COMMUNITY AND THE PASTORAL OVERSEER

In various locations of Church History and in his personal experience, Niebuhr saw the dynamic and restless relation between the living God and human faiths which responded in various degrees.⁵¹ Evidently, he saw the need for that relationship to be radicalized continually in theology and Church and through them in the world. He is not always explicit about his ecclesiology. However, what he does say (especially in The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry) is consistent with what one might imply from his theology and socio-historical analyses.

Niebuhr uses a polar analysis⁵² that he may emphasize the dynamic relation between God and human faith in which the Church is involved. First, the Church itself as community of believers is "the subjective pole of the objective rule of God."⁵³ Namely, in the separate relativity of its life, the Church intentionally seeks to profess, to represent knowingly, the overarching reality of God's

⁵⁰Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, p. 254; Church and Ministry, p. 20; The Responsible Self, pp. 143-45, 174-78.

⁵¹See Niebuhr, Kingdom of God, p. 44.

⁵²Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, p. 19

⁵³Ibid.

sovereign claim.

Because the Church's faith has found its final trust and loyalty in the One experienced as trustworthy, it attempts to rely upon God to make integrity and consistency in its living and in the world. Even then, it expects God to complete and correct it in its further experiences, to change its mind constantly. These transforming encounters of the Church may be mediated through people of similar or dissimilar beliefs.⁵⁴ However, its faithful orientation is primarily made known and possible by God's reconciling revelation in Jesus Christ.⁵⁵

Above all, Niebuhr approaches every experience with specific questions: "What is the news of God? What is God doing in this? What does he want us to do?" He takes questions that may arise in the exceptional practical situations, social crises and personal suffering, and has made them the norm of a radical faith in the living God and of the theology that serves that faith.⁵⁶

The Church for Niebuhr also contains an inseparable polarity of community and institution, a communion of mind and life and also conventions which give wholeness and form.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism, pp. 47-48, 109-13; Christ and Culture, pp. 238-40, 255-56; The Meaning of Revelation, p. ix, 129-39; The Responsible Self, pp. 125-26, 137-38, 142-45; and his "The Gift of the Catholic Vision," Theology Today, IV (January 1948), 510, 514-17.

⁵⁵Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, p. 20.

⁵⁶Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, pp. 67, 167, 169.

⁵⁷Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, pp. 21-23.

In his The Kingdom of God of America, Niebuhr discusses constructive Protestantism. The Protestant communities, urgently convinced of God's sovereignty, challenged the absolute claims of every relative power, including institutions, and also struggled to build institutions and other structures which could increase obedience to the absolute God without usurping his claim.⁵⁸

This community which is becoming incarnated in appropriate institutions is very dynamic. The urgent faith in God's sovereignty, this conviction of his present initiative and independence, is the living principle which continually critiques limited perspectives and which reconstructs them into newly faithful unities. Thus, the community mind and spirit is open to the Church's memory and hope for the future.⁵⁹ The community's thought may experience debate and conflict because it presupposes and anticipates its commonality to be in its common Lord.⁶⁰

For Niebuhr, "Truth...is represented by the whole dynamic and complementary work of the company of knowers and believers."⁶¹ By analysis and juxtaposition, Niebuhr himself constantly relativizes various positions of periods

⁵⁸Niebuhr, Kingdom of God, pp. 17-44.

⁵⁹Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, p. 23. See also his Kingdom of God, p. 198.

⁶⁰Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, p. 23.

⁶¹H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Unity of the Church," Theology Today, III (October 1946), p. 384.

and schools of thought and critiqued their limitations. Yet, he also affirms how each perspective contributes to confessing God's total claim.⁶²

New understandings which appreciate our community with other eras and schools of thought are never merely accidental or the product of superior minds but rather God's realization of his universal sovereignty.⁶³ This is God's way of graciously completing our sinful incompleteness, of focussing us on what he is doing. In opening itself up to God's reconciliation of our understandings, the Church community models for the world the increase of the love of God and Neighbor.

The dynamics of the community's becoming incarnate in appropriate institutional forms is further evidenced by the other polarities which Niebuhr indicates. The Church entails the creative interaction between unity (of trust and loyalty) and pluralism (of gifts, disciplines, functions, and expressions).⁶⁴

...For what is the church save the assembly of people before God, or the movement of those who, abandoning all relative and finite goals, turn toward the infinite end of life? It is the ecclesia which has been called out of the pluralism and temporalism of the world to

⁶²Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, pp. 229, 240, 255-56. See also his "Religious Realism," "Towards a New Other Worldliness," and "Back to Benedict?"

⁶³See Niebuhr, "The Gift of the Catholic Vision."

⁶⁴Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, pp. 23-24. See also his The Meaning of Revelation, pp. 104, 134.

loyalty to the supreme reality and only good,
on which the goodness of all things depends.⁶⁵

According to Niebuhr the Church is local and universal, in its smallest form representing the body of Christ, but also pointing to the community universal in time and locale.⁶⁶ It is protestant and catholic--protesting any community or community symbol which is idolized, but also representing symbolically the recognition of the One's presence in all existents.⁶⁷ Finally, the Church has various polar relations with the "world," the companion community under God's sovereignty which acknowledges that sovereignty only implicitly or not at all. These relations include learning from the world's ironic knowledge and obedience of God's sovereignty and, with the good news, inviting the world also to experience the reconciling revelation of the divine love.⁶⁸ For Niebuhr, the Church and its leadership are indeed ecclesia. They are the community called out from many perspectives and situations, whether secular or theological. They are called together to respond to the independent autonomous "Other" before whom we are one body with many different members and before whom with the everyday world of reality we are "the world of grace--God's Kingdom."⁶⁹

⁶⁵Niebuhr, Kingdom of God, p. 67.

⁶⁶Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, p. 24. ⁶⁷Ibid., p. 25.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 25-27. See also his Radical Monotheism pp. 87, 96, 98.

⁶⁹Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, p. 256.

The reconciling relation with God and world and among its members which the Church is given in Jesus Christ is the divine alternative reality which the Church is called to profess in its structures and in its relations with other perspectives. Accordingly, Niebuhr defines a very evangelical purpose for the Church (and the ministry): "the increase among men of the love of God and neighbor," a love which includes "rejoicing in the presence of the beloved, gratitude, reverence and loyalty."⁷⁰ Above all the dual love is God's sovereign claim for radical faith made through all relative things and also the wonderful gift given through God's love demonstrated in Christ. For Niebuhr, the evangelical ("increase") mission of reconciling love which is grounded in Christ is what is supposed to determine all the Church's structures and activities.⁷¹ The Church's thought, actions, and relationships are all geared to professing. By proclaiming and modelling the Gospel, it is supposed to increase love both in itself and in the world.

When Niebuhr analyzes historical approaches to the ministry, he discusses them according to their organizing principle, the key by which the defining areas of ministry (work, call, authority, and the people served) are shaped. He concludes that the "emerging new conception of

⁷⁰Niebuhr, Church and Ministry, pp. 31 & 32.

⁷¹Ibid., 32 & 39.

ministry" is "the pastoral director," and for some he may seem to reach this conclusion too happily. However, he wishes to protect what he considers a providential concept from its blatant perversion into the "big operator, who manipulates the organizational machinery for his and its own sake. Niebuhr counteracts this potential by grounding the concept in the purpose of the Church to be for the sake of God and neighbor. The directors must "administer the Church's work." Their adoption of a managerial style of leadership must continue the ministry's being determined by "the difference that Christian faith and Church life require," dedication to God.⁷²

The concept of ministry that Niebuhr sees being revealed is in every respect determined by the Church's ministry of reconciliation, "'edifying' the church,...to bring into being a people of God who as a Church will serve the purpose of the Church in the local community and the world..., the administration of a community that is directed toward the whole purpose of the Church...."⁷³ As the Church feels called to God's service and reconciliation, it calls members of the community to consider whether God has given them the necessary qualities and his will for them to

⁷²Ibid., pp. 79-81, cf. p. 90.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 82-83.

prepare to lead the Church in its purpose.⁷⁴

The pastoral directors' communal authority, their representation of the mind and tradition of the Church, takes precedence and reconstitutes their other authorities. Thus, their teaching authority is for "interpreting the mind of the community-before-God" (through Bible and tradition). Their spiritual authority, their experience of what they commend to others, is received by personally meeting God-given crises ("humblings or clarifications") while participating in the spiritual life of the whole church.⁷⁵ Their institutional authority, their representation of politics, is the responsibility and authority "to hold in balance, to invigorate and to maintain communication among a host of activities and their responsible leaders all directed toward a common end."⁷⁶ This end presumably is the community's increasing among men the love of God and neighbor.

The directors' people is "the ministering community whose work is in the world." This world the Church serves needs rebirth into a meaningful integrity. For it experiences God as hidden and themselves in meaningless bondage to pluralistic powers. The ministering community needs to be able to help people to see themselves and respond "as

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 85, cf. p. 66.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 86-89, cf. p. 70.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 90-91, cf. pp. 69-70.

man engaged in conflict, conversation, and reconciliation with God." Remember that this is the world which acknowledges God's sovereignty only implicitly or not at all.⁷⁷

Nor Niebuhr, the Church to which pastors are called is indeed what we have called a professing community. It is dedicated to giving community realization and evangelization to a reality that differs beneficially from the obvious reality. This professed reality is divine, namely the radical love of God and neighbors found in Jesus Christ. The pastors are the resident experts in maintaining and legitimating the community's alternate sense of reality and in guiding the community's resocialization of potentially new members.⁷⁸

In particular situations as God reveals his presence to the Church community, it desires to profess its knowing and responding to the surrounding reality of God's love. The community's realization of this love is made known and possible through the personal name Jesus Christ, which is related to the names kurios theos and Yahweh elohim. This community desires to communicate an understanding of God's creative structuring, limiting, and redemptive presence. For all the deified values professed by communities are precarious before his sovereignty. The gospel-professing community tries to guide lives to profess

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 91-94, 78, 26.

⁷⁸Berger, The Social Construction of Reality pp. 100-18, 136-50.

a responding love for God and for his cause in the neighbors because he provides for all existents and their valuables.

Pastors take their place in the gospel-professing community by virtue of God's revelatory and reconciling activities in their own lives and by virtue of the gifts God has provided them to facilitate similar experiences. They must coordinate the community's activities. For the activities must stay in touch with God's reality known by the collective community which contemplates God's activity and in touch with the mission of reconciling service in the world that God's reality in Christ gives the Church. Our next chapter will consider strategies appropriate to our findings about the Church and pastors.

CHAPTER 4

NURTURING THE CHURCH'S PARTICIPATION IN THE GOSPEL STORY

We have analyzed the Church as an organization and the pastors' place in it as an organization. The most instructive parallels to the Church and the ministry were in human structures which profess a beneficial reality which has a precarious status in obvious reality--institutions and their leadership, associations, staff, and professions. We could then notice the Church as an explicitly religious community among these professing communities.

With the help of H. Richard Niebuhr, it became apparent that human structures implicitly are professing communities, religious communities, and even communities professing the sovereignty of God. However, in the latter category human professing is often sinfully incomplete and negative and provides the context for the Church's mission of professing. Professing the Gospel of reconciliation in Jesus Christ, the Church community is God's agent for radicalizing the dynamic relation between God's sovereign claim and human faiths. Moreover, the pastors nurture the congregations' sense that Christ's Gospel is really present and coordinate them to respond with their unique evangelistic mission of reconciliation.

Expecting, though often misconstruing God's contemporary presence, the Church must constantly assess its

multifaceted relations to God and to the world-before-God and respond to God and world in harmony with God's presence in the world. This living profession of the Gospel's real presence is the preeminent call of the Church. The pastors' place (of service) is right in the middle of this process: encouraging, equipping, and facilitating the congregations' knowledge of God's vivid reality in Christ, but also challenging, prodding, and directing the congregations to profess actively their collective awareness of God's real presence in the world.

Now we arrive at the practical portion of this thesis. How can pastors strategically use their wide-ranging role in service of what the congregations are, "gospel-professing communities?" In general, there must be settings (gatherings of resources, personnel, and participants) where human professions of faith are made more apparent in order that they may be redirected by the "knowledge" of God and Jesus.

One might immediately attack the nihilism functionally professed in many congregational activities. However admirable this is as a goal, starting there has its disadvantages. One would be fighting the task orientation of many groups with what might seem at first to be an esoteric analysis. Moreover, a "searching the Scriptures" approach may too easily manipulate the selection, interpretation, and application of traditions. Both these

problems would be accentuated in congregational groups which are blind to their conflicts with traditional witnesses.

Another initial approach would entail independent work-study. Here could be a key step toward a congregation which is more aware of its mission. Hopefully, participants from all areas of the congregation could be recruited as an influential cadre and support group, "a fellowship for professing Christians." The group could easily take its place among the educational and teacher-training efforts which already exist.

The professing fellowship would be nurtured by the traditions which embody Israel's and the Church's formational faith. For it would collectively practice scriptural exegesis which highlights the unique witnesses embedded in the various contexts. The fellowship would seek these witnesses' theologies--the understandings they profess about where and how God seems to be interacting with their communities. Moreover, so far as is possible, each discovered theology would be compared with similar theologies which arose in preceding and succeeding situations.

Above all, the scriptural witnesses to God's presence should be applied to our own contemporary situation. For one thing, we would explore how scriptural perspectives change our awareness of what God is doing and of how faithfully we are responding. Secondly, we would suggest how

our changed awareness mandates behavioral and structural changes in various settings including the congregation and its task groups. Occasionally the fellowship could also plan and test experiments which implement new understandings.

This proposal requires a seriously studious mood which must somehow sustain many complex processes and information. Of course, the leader must adaptively encourage and maintain group participation in exegetical, theological, and hermeneutical procedures which draw upon and inform personal understandings. However, the leadership burden might be more broadly shared among the group if there could be a handbook or workbook which formally guides the moves from textual exegesis to hermeneutic.¹

Although such a studious mood would be a useful addition within most congregations, faith which pervades the whole person must be related to the studied texts. Once people have some certainty about what texts are saying, opportunity must be allowed for personal reactions. Participants should be encouraged to express the impact of a text within symbolic and artistic media. Also fellowship meetings should open and close with acts appropriate to the worshipful character of its discipline. Meditative and conversational prayers could gather up and dedicate the group's insights into truth and faith. Ritualized acts could be based upon the participants symbolic insights.

In these ways, the fellowship could dramatically glorify God and impress the story of our faith upon our individual and corporate lives. The group should evaluate each session as to the learning, group formation, and spiritual growth that seems to be happening. The last one or two sessions of the fellowship's duration should do intensive evaluations, recommendations, and celebrations about what had happened.

Recruiting should be done carefully. One might decide to ask an existing group to adopt the new format. Otherwise, in public announcements and personal contacts, one should issue invitations like the following: "A meeting to organize a new study group, 'Read for Your Life (Readfyl) Fellowship,' will be held [date, time, and place]. It is hoped that the fellowship's members will become better equipped in discovering the scriptures' witnesses to God's interaction with us and in applying that witness to our own situations. To this end, the gathered group's activities--discussion, personal reactions and evaluations, symbolic creations, and worship--will be based upon the members' guided interpretation of Scripture texts. All interested persons are invited to attend the organizational meeting."

At the organizational meeting, the pastor would elicit hopes and expectations about the proposed group. Also, providing samples of the interpretation handbook, he

¹See the Appendix to Chapter 4, "Read for Your Life."

or she would suggest how the anticipated procedures might meet those expectations. Commitment would be made to a launching retreat, eight to twelve weekly group sessions lasting about two hours each, and regular periods of individual study and meditation. Seven to ten participants, who are of high school or older age, would be desirable. In calling for commitments, one should excite the interests of potential participants, but clearly brief them about the time and effort that is necessary. On one hand, one would encourage concern and curiosity about Scriptural witnesses, a spirit of pioneering for the congregation, and the desire for Christian nurture in a group context. To this one would tie the necessity of careful, but hopefully rewarding, work. Sufficiently interested participants and the pastor would seek a schedule for the retreat and meetings which would include most of the interested parties.

Subsequent consultations should plan the launching retreat. The pastor should already have basic ideas in mind. Basically, a fairly interesting and simple text should be chosen. For that text, one should anticipate a schedule which compresses all the group and individual processes that will be used weekly in relation with each text. Some completeness of each stage will be sacrificed for an orientation to all the stages related together and for the formation of a supportive learning group. Analytical and other less active endeavors should be relieved by non-verbal

devices for group formation, singing, symbolic and dramatic creations, recreation, and, of course, meals and unstructured relaxation. There should also be time allowed to evaluate the experience and to decide about which texts will be considered in the weekly sessions.

The pastor and part of the Fellowship could plan the retreat schedule. Another part of the group could make plans concerning food, accommodations, learning-related materials, extracurricular activities, and other supportive details. As far as possible, the group members should take responsibility for planning, supplying, and leading aspects of the retreat. Before the retreat, the pastor may suggest the text and general materials which could be read ahead of time.

From the retreat, the Fellowship will know better what works and also where more materials, time, and leadership are needed. At some point in the retreat, the pastor lays out a variety of Scripture texts. Each chosen text should have significant theological interest and also manageability in terms of available resources, the skills of the pastor and the group, and the time allotted. The Fellowship decides the order in which they will consider the texts in the weekly sessions.

Before each session, the pastor may provide unavailable materials and clues pertaining to the relevant text. He or she may mimeograph useful summaries, loan reference

materials, or provide a research room somewhere. Also during the week, both pastor and group should do as much as possible on the text, as guided by the handbook in the next section. The pastor should do extra research in the more difficult areas. He or she should stay far enough ahead to make recommendations about the members' individual study.

Here is a suggested agenda for each weekly session:

Prayers related to a desire to hear God's word and to individual concerns.

What is the text?

What does the text say and how?

What does the text mean for its own time? time to express this

What does the text mean for us? time to react: feelings, changed convictions, expressive acts of creativity or worship.

Evaluation and announcements concerning the next session.

Prayers: silent meditations on significant themes discovered and conversational prayers related to the session's experiences.

Most of this agenda is derived from the larger divisions of the handbook. The pastor and the group will need to judge when to remain with an area, when to move on, and when to go back to an unresolved issue. If time

between the opening prayer and evaluation is insufficient for completing the interpretation of a text, have the group summarize its insights before the evaluation.

To summarize, a pilot group of fixed duration would be formed in a local setting. The group would analyze scripture texts so as to expose the faiths and theologies professed in their concrete materials. It would test these witnesses' impact upon various aspects of our contemporary life where we try to understand and to act out our own responsive relation to God. The group's members would be fruitfully exposed to a process of interpretation which can also be applied to other literature: extra-canonical writings, creeds, and even modern literature. More importantly they would have the opportunity to internalize the dynamic sense of God's reality which our traditions profess.

The insights of the group could be reinforced and well-utilized in many ways once it is established. Regular reports could be made to the larger congregation. Preaching and worship could be built around some of the group's discoveries. Once this approach of interpreting and applying scriptural witnesses is nurtured, congregational members will be better prepared for interpreting subsequent texts and theologies. Moreover, they should be better equipped to search for non-manipulative relations between past witnesses and present situations and to make decisions which profess the Gospel and not something else.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 4

"READ FOR YOUR LIFE:"

A HANDBOOK FOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION ¹

Fruitful reading is a disciplined endeavor which seeks salient points and how they are made. As in reading any literature from another culture, we experience a certain alienness despite our familiarity with the Bible's words. However, since we may revere or reject the transcendent character of the Bible, we may read with inappropriate biases which prevent the Bible from speaking its own message. Namely, we already have our mind set about what the Bible should say in general, and we fit individual passages into this. Our misguided reverence or "objectivity" may in fact manipulate and falsify the Bible's message.

Therefore, the opening and pervading guideline in reading a Bible text is "Let it have its own say" even if we do not agree or even understand. When drawing conclusions, we must continually return to the text and ask, "Is it really saying this?" As in dynamic friendship, we want to relate to the text with real understanding, not with a precariously illusioned understanding.

The following methodology grew out of a long struggle to experience and to learn from the "foreignness" of Bible texts. From various perspectives, different ques-

¹See the Bibliography for the Appendix to Chapter 4, which lists the works upon which the Handbook is based.

tions are asked to expose elements, relationships, and interests. For indeed, Bible texts are not neutral. They are very "interested," both according to their human conditioning and to their witness to Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

PRELIMINARY GUIDELINES

- (1) Skim through the whole handbook, observing its format.
- (2) As completely and specifically as possible, answer the questions below through your own careful observations of everything in the text and through consultation with basic reference works which help to observe what the text says:

- Historical maps
- Bible dictionaries
- Concordances (lists the Biblical occurrences of words and phrases)
- English translations
- "Background" books (collections of literature and of social, historical, cultural, and religious information believed relevant to the Bible)
- Histories (conclusions about observable events in Israel, Early Church, and the Ancient World)

- (3) Double check and expand your insights by consulting "expert" conclusions:

- Introductions (for the Bible or either Testament, they provide brief proposals, especially concerning formal and literary developments.)

- Theologies (for the Bible or either Testament)
- Commentaries (verse-by-verse conclusions about a Bible book, may contain a little of the information found in the other references)
- Articles (references found in footnotes and bibliographies; deal more specifically with texts, text-types, traditions, etc.)
- Handbooks on Biblical interpretation (may give examples which are relevant to one's text)

(4) The sections and questions within them are intended to be somewhat sequential. Some questions later in the sequence may provide clues which help answer earlier questions with which you had trouble. However, you should postpone conclusions about "what it means" (theology) and "what it means for us" (hermeneutics) until you are fairly certain about "what it says."

WHAT IS THE TEXT?

Determining the Working Unit by Formal Principles

- Where are the beginnings and endings which mark off the smallest entity that can stand on its own as a formally complete speech or story?
- Where are the changes in content, style, mood and tone, person and tense?
- Where are formulas or other elements which begin

(perhaps forcefully) something new as compared with the previous?

-Where are formulas or other elements where a relatively new element is brought to a discernible ending?

Translation

-Which translation did you pick?

-Are there any translation problems related to variant versions of the old manuscripts?

-According to usage elsewhere (concordance) and to authoritative definitions (Bible dictionaries), what are fuller meanings of key words and phrases in the text?

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY? HOW DOES IT SAY IT?

Analysis of Formal (Socially Expected) Elements

-What is the text's structure, a systemic outline describing the relationships of all elements in the unity?

-In concise formal terms what is each element? (definition, command, accusation, justification, etc.)

-According to clues of sequence, conjunctions, formulas, what is dominant and what is subordinate?

-What are the structural principles of the text?

-Which rhetorical or stylistic devices, institutional formalities, or systematic approaches control it?

-Which of them control the others?

-Ultimately, which controls the whole text?

-By comparison with the dominant structural principle of other texts, to what extent is this one typical and to what extent does it deviate?

-What identification describes the structural make-up of the whole unit?

-What is its general i.d.? (narrative, speech, prose, prayer, etc.)

-What is a more specific i.d.? (debate or miracle narrative, supplicatory or thanksgiving prayer, etc.)

-What is the setting, the real-life context of our unit's formality?

-According to implicit and explicit clues which accompany this and other examples of similar formality, where in the society or community could these conventions fit. (Caution: may or may not be analogous to our social relationships.)

-Where (socially) would one find the relationships established within the text and/or between the user of this type of text and his audience? (worship, school, court, family, military, cultural creativity, etc.)

- Who (roles) would communicate and witness the use of this text-type?
- Where in life would the mood and purpose of this type fit?
- Using the same kinds of questions, what is the particular setting of our text's embodiment of the text-type.
- What intentions (e.g. edifying, historical) or interests (miraculous, memorabilia) are related to our text?
 - How are they related?
 - Which is finally dominant?
 - By comparison with other texts' dominant intentions or interests, is this one typical?
- What most completely describes the formal make-up of the whole unit?
- Which of the above factors (structure, setting, intention) most controls the character of the text?
- By comparison with the determining factor of other texts, what "text-type" (decatalogue, sermon, miracle story, etc.) best identifies their conventionality?
 - What is known about the history of the text-type's use?
 - To what extent does our text deviate from that text-type?
- According to the formalities and particularities of our text, what is its main point, its impact as an autonomous unit? (Try to draw a simple picture which images the

relationships which make this main point)

Analysis of the Text as Written Literature (style, sources, etc.)

-What is the literary plan of the text?

-Is it a literary whole?

-What are its themes, structure, and literary units?

-How are these units related? (thematic, formal, chronological, or haphazard connection)

-Is there more than one sequence of motifs or incidents developed in the same document?

-Does the evidence suggest the work of several writers speaking from divergent perspectives?

-Do the different units stand alone or are they pieces of larger literary tendencies in this book or Testament?

-Are the materials literarily organized by key phrases and arrangements that are found among other materials or by a key summary statement?

-How are they placed in their immediate and wider literary context?

-Is there a wide progression of thoughts and themes, a significant development of normative motifs, or a definite programmatic use of certain controlling ideas?

-Are these larger patterns in which our text participates similar to other patterned organization of diverse materials? (Royal Chronicles, Primeval

Gospel, Itinerary)

- What are your conclusions about the origins and composition of literary materials in our text?
- How do the literary findings relate to the historical context? (language, culture, history, thought forms, and religions of the ancient world)
- When and Where was our text written?

History of the Text's Traditions (significant representations of heritage)

- What indications are there of tradition-furthering forces?
 - Are there interests of certain communities or groups to further important themes and memories with a fitting language?
 - Are there any geographical interests indicated?
 - What social, political, or cultic influences are at work?
 - What themes and motifs are present or surprisingly missing? (exodus, wilderness, sinai, resurrection, etc.)
- Based upon previous literary and formal analysis and other clues, what stages of tradition are indicated?
 - Did the text, or a portion, once exist in an oral form, a common oral mode of communication in the ancient world that may have been transmitted by word of mouth for a certain period of time?

- Is there sufficient connection between old oral material to indicate the previous existence of a larger oral cycle?
- According to developmental factors, how many written stages preceded the last major literary adaptation?
 - What developments made it possible for the older material to be incorporated into a written entity?
 - On the lowest literary level, how are oral materials organized by arrangement and by written additions (extrapolations from oral materials which frame them, connect them among themselves, and connect them to broader literary concerns)?
 - Which literary developments supersede other literary developments (especially pieces of previously determined sources)?
 - What kind of structural models, forces, interests, settings and text-types contribute to these different levels?
- What developments are responsible for the final text which we know?
 - How did it receive its place in the final work of which it is part?
 - What additions, modifications, deletions happened to the text and its contributing materials?
 - What programmatic factors elsewhere in the work provide for the inclusion of our text.

- Does our text serve any special function for these programmatic factors? (introduction, conclusion, summary, transition)

What Is the Relation of Our Text to Observable History?

- What probabilities about historical factors can one derive from our text?
 - What can one conclude from ancient references to observable events which are found in our text, in other community traditions, and/or in broader cultural traditions?
 - What historical contexts are indicated by each level of tradition according to its structure, setting, intentions and interests, and text-type?
 - Do any of these historical observations (especially events, movements, persons, concepts and their relationships) point to any influential contexts that we have missed so far.

What Is Contributed to Understanding Our Text by Supporting Fields?

- Established chronological outlines about Israel, Church, and Ancient World?
- Archaeological research and conclusions?
- History of culture?
- Geography and topography?
- Comparative religions?

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN FOR ITS OWN TIME? (Its Theology)

-At each level of our text's traditions how do the elements reveal the relationship of Yahweh or Jesus Christ to reality?

-How has that knowledge influenced the choice of text-types and all the dominant and subdominant factors in them?

-How has the identity of Yahweh or Jesus Christ absorbed and repelled the surrounding culture?

-How have traditional themes, concepts, mythical and symbolic images, and events been selected and loaded to reveal the contemporary activity of God?

-How have Israel's or the Church's understanding of and reaction to observable events been shaped by confrontation with Yahweh or Jesus Christ?

-Concerning the final stage of our text in its subsuming work, what understanding of God (Jesus, Israel, Church, World) has guided the last writer's contributions?

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN FOR US? (Hermeneutics)

-What is God's word spoken through our text to us?

-How do the ancient impacts of this text and our own reality interact to reveal the words/deeds of Yahweh/Jesus Christ today?

-How does it change our historical understanding of our community formed by the divine-human encounters.

- Depending on whether our text is in the Old or New Testament, where do we see similar traditions and kerygmatic impacts?
- Where in Church and cultural History do we see these traditions' having new potential to reveal God and his will?
- In what way does the kerygmatic impact of our text react with our contemporary situation?
- Our contemporary understanding?
 - What cultural insights does it draw into new power or reject or modify? (social sciences, philosophy, education, etc.)
 - What religious and theological understanding does it draw into foundational convictions or reject or modify? (prayer, holiness, piety, discipline, ecclesiology, eschatology, judgment, creation, world, life, salvation, sacraments, etc)
- Our contemporary events?
- Our active existence? (church order, social order and justice, relation to creation, spiritual discipline, repentance and dedication.)
- What does it mean to you that our text has so many actual and potential testimonies and applications?
- What aspects of the text's impact do you honestly feel are out of line with a complete faith in God today?

- Does the development of this or other texts confirm you in that objection?
- Do your objections change if you translate problematic imagery into other imagery or descriptions which contemporize the text's relationship between God and reality?
- In all of these hermeneutical areas, where does the text hit your understanding most forcefully with the presence of the living God?
- What responses does the text prompt you to make?
 - with regard to yourself?
 - with regard to groups and communities within which you participate?
 - Church?
 - family, town, state, world, creation?
 - eternal life?

CHAPTER 5

DISCIPLINING THE CHURCHES TO LIVE THE STORY OF FAITH

In the chapter previous to this one we suggested a discipline which could vivify God's sovereignly reconciling presence as proclaimed in the Church's traditions. That discipline makes some contemporary conclusions about the presence of God and about Christians' response. However, we now need a discipline whereby Christians may begin appropriately with contemporary concerns. In searching for such a pedagogical approach which would undergird the Church as a professing community, I happened upon the application of case methods to ministry and theology which had been made in the last decade.

By case method, I generally mean that the key factors and salient relationships of a first-hand event are sought and presented, often in a distilled report. Then, concerning the event, the presentation and/or a discussion group draws some conclusions which express what is learned from the event and is potentially applicable to other events. Of course, case methods have been utilized in many fields. All of these case methods were concerned about general religious dimensions, God's presence, or capable Christian ministry.

Some writers pointed out that case methodology or experience-based insights had been long used by the Western

religious traditions: moral theologians, Rabbinic Judaism, the Teaching Elder of the Reformed Tradition, and Jonathan Edwards.¹ Unfortunately, they miss the important parallels in the wisdom traditions of the Ancient World. Especially the "fear of God" wisdom in the Old and New Testaments drew insights from experience about relationships with God.²

Most of the writers I considered seem to have the clergy in mind, although some explicitly suggest this event-oriented approach as a model in which the laity could share.³ The participating awareness of the case methodology could counteract the disenchantment problem. It provides people with an interpretation which sifts experience for its alternate sense of reality, God's Kingdom. It provides minister-

¹James M. Gustafson, "Theological Education as Professional Education," Theological Education, V (Spring 1969), 259; C. Samuel Calian, "The Grassroots Theologian," Theological Education, V (Summer 1969), 373; David S. Schuller, "Case Method in Theological Education," Theological Education, IV (Autumn 1967), 574; and James W. Bergland, "Field Education as a Locus for Theological Reflection," Theological Education, V (Summer 1969), 339.

²See Gerhard von Rad, Wisdom in Israel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972).

³Keith R. Bridston, "The Trivial and the Ultimate: A Report on the Case-Study Institute," Theological Education, IX (Autumn 1972), 66; Calian, "The Grassroots Theologian," p. 374; James D. Glasse, Putting It Together in the Parish (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 104; and Owen C. Thomas, "Professional Education and Theological Education," Theological Education, IV (Autumn 1967), 559, 562.

ing Christians with a sensitivity to how well they are achieving what they believe they should be doing.

Before we can use these event-oriented methods, we must better understand their character. Even though these "theological" case methods have similar formats, they differ in interests and, hence, in results. According to their interests two distinct types are present in the case method literature which we are considering. I have also noticed hints for a third, a mixed type. All three of these types could have their place in a congregation which wishes to be conscientiously professing the Gospel.

The first type is an action-oriented case method.

This is exemplified by James Glasse's work, the most developed case approach that I found described. So that "the pastor can keep his bearings and control his actions to maintain professional distance on his practice."⁴ Glasse prescribes the basis of his case approach to be the "Professional Event:"

- I. Establishing an Appropriate Relationship
 - 1. Perception /being aware of persons or problems presented to our attention./
 - 2. Recognition /of the matter from the point of view of persons involved./
 - 3. Responsibility /accepted or deferred/
- II. Preparing for Action
 - 4. Diagnosis
 - 5. Design of Alternatives
 - 6. Decision
- III. The Heart of the Matter
 - 7. Action

⁴Glasse, Putting It Together in the Parish, p. 73, my emphasis, hereafter cited as Parish.

IV. Learning from the Event8. Description9. Analysis

10. Evaluation /of performance according to professional competence (achievement of desired results) and theological adequacy (worthiness to be part of the Church's ministry)⁵

Concerning this view of Christian life as responsible practice, Glasse uses a very typical format for written cases. On one page, one is to record an event for which he had responsibility. The written case has four parts which receive inputs from parts of the professional event. One may use fictitious names or indicate areas of confidentiality.

(a) Background. From Stage I, indicate when and how you became aware of/involvement in the event and which pressures and persons initiated/shaped the event.

(b) Description. From steps 7 and 8, record what you did and what happened.

(c) Analysis. Like step 9, ask "What is going on here?" Identify issues, relationships, changes, and resistances.

(d) Evaluation. According to step 10, how effective were you in the event? What desired results and unanticipated factors occurred? Why or Why not? Indicate helpful issues for the group to discuss.⁶

⁵Ibid., pp. 74-78, quoting the headings.

⁶Ibid., p. 87, cf. p. 79.

Then, Glasse describes a "case conference" where three to twelve people undergo structured interaction based upon one case, whose record has been distributed beforehand. The leader keeps the group on appointed tasks. The case presenter keeps time.

5 minutes for Clarification of information. The group asks the presenter questions about steps 1-8 of the professional event as recorded in (a) and (b) of the written case.

25 minutes for Analysis of dynamics in event. The group applies itself to step 9 recorded in (c) of the written case and the presenter listens.

10 minutes for Evaluation of performance. While the presenter listens, the group considers the professional competence and theological adequacy of step 10 as recorded in (d) of the written case.

10 minutes for Reflection and reaction by presenter.

10 minute break before the next case.⁷

Later Glasse clarifies the issues expected in theological evaluation.

What concept of ministry [and of Church] does he have?...How is God at work in this case?... What does this say about man before God?"⁸

Although I did not find other descriptions as complete as Glasse's, I found other action-oriented case

section ⁷Ibid., pp. 89-91, quoting the time limits and the headings.

⁸Ibid., p. 103.

processes which resemble his. Predictably, some materials from Action Training Centers seem to apply this mode to social problems and remedies. Individuals and groups directly engage personal and social problems. Then, they diagnose the situation and construct a strategy. Finally, various evaluations occur including the ways of using and not using religious traditions.⁹

Schuller and Thomas¹⁰ describe theological education whose materials are written cases dealing with problem situations. Discussion is primarily centered upon decisions and the factors which influence decisions. For Thomas, his use of case method with Church history extends theology that is done in relation to specific issues of life and ministry.

This first type is what we usually think of as case method. It focuses upon case protagonists as decision-making actors. It tries to understand the inputs and the effects of their actions. Then, one may ask theological questions which evaluate what the action attempted and did

⁹Robert H. Bonthius, "Pastoral Care for Structures --As Well as Persons," Pastoral Psychology, XVIII (May 1967), 18 and his "Resource Planning in Theological Education: A Response and Offer," Theological Education, V (Winter 1969), 71-72. William R. Voelkel, "Theological Practice in Action Training," Theological Education, VI (Winter 1970), 116-21.

¹⁰Schuller, "Case Method in Theological Education," and Owen C. Thomas, "Some Issues in Theological Education," Theological Education, V (Summer 1969), 346-56.

or the religious resources which were used for support. This discipline strengthens a conscientious decision-making which engages problems and which learns from its results. It rightly assumes that Church practice could be improved by reflection and takes an interest in fostering better effectiveness. Both pastors and lay Christians could apply this discipline fruitfully in their responsibilities.

The second type is an experience-oriented case method. The general format of this type may be very similar to the first type. For example, Samuel Calian's two written steps and two discussed steps¹¹ are almost identical to Glasse's four parts for written cases which we described above. However, we find different presuppositions and interests operating when we examine what Calian has to say a little later.

...In life, there is no significant happening that does not contain theological implications. Theology is a search for His signs in creation. ...Each of us is writing or articulating a 'gospel' according to his self-understanding of what these signs are. The purpose of theological or religious education is to draw out our private thoughts in the light of critical historical investigation, biblical exegesis, and through rigorous philosophical and theological questioning of the church, the world, and all religious practices. The goal is to strengthen one's faith through a critical process of in-

¹¹C. Samuel Calian "Case Study Materials and Seminary Teaching," Theological Education, IX (Winter 1973), 136.

vestigation rooted in the human situations.¹²

We see that a mutation has occurred in the interests which motivate the use of case methodology. There is less interest in the performance of ministry and more interest in the theological insights which one can have from experiences that are not restricted to the performance of ministry.

From Ross Snyder, Carl Trutter has adopted a process which shows us how different interests can alter the format of the experience-oriented type of case method.

In summary, these three steps are (1) building a detailed picture which recaptures the breadth of some significant experience; (2) constructing an organized pattern of meaning; and (3) sensing within the pattern of meaning the presence and power of God.¹³

Here step (1) resembles background and description in the other type and step (2) corresponds to analysis or identifying the issues. However, step (3) expresses the experiential insight which this type of case method means by theological evaluation.

Sometimes Action Training Centers use this method after a "plunge" into a social problem. Reflective feedback on the encounter leads to an expression of the theological content that is stimulated.¹⁴ For Beisswenger, to lead in this process is to be a "spiritual guide." The

¹²Ibid., p. 137. See also his "The Grassroots Theologian."

¹³Carl B. Trutter, "Theologizing in Field Education", Theological Education, VIII (Autumn 1971), 33.

¹⁴Woelkel, "Theological Practice in Action Training," p. 116.

guide and learners meditate on experiences that engage the learner in order to nurture the ability "to discern God's activity." Guides and learners collaborate in this. The guides model the process of reading life theologically and foster a relationship in which the learner pursues the same process.¹⁵

In experience-oriented case method, a universe of experiences is opened up to faith's theological sensitivity.¹⁶ The type confronts the retreating field and "crisis in religious imagination". With Jonathan Edwards, it seeks to "behold the intentions of God expressed in the universe...."¹⁷ It searches for the ultimate expressed in the trivial.¹⁸ This type is more concerned with insight--with fostering awareness of participating in something larger. The emphasis is on what people experience, especially in its theological dimensions. After insights into experiences, one may then suggest an action agenda which could include theological resources.¹⁹

¹⁵Donald F. Beisswenger, "Differentiating Modes of Supervision in Theological Field Education," Theological Education, XI (Autumn 1974), 57-58.

¹⁶Lucien Richard, "The Existing Malaise in the Theologizing of Field Experience," Theological Education, IX (Autumn 1972), 69-70.

¹⁷Bergland, "Field Education as a Locus for 'Theological Reflection,'" 338 & 339.

¹⁸Bridston, "The Trivial and the Ultimate," p. 66.

¹⁹See Calian, "Case Study Materials and Seminary Teaching," p. 140, and George J. Dyer, "The Laboratory in Theology," Theological Education, VII (Summer 1971), 265.

Again, both types of case method examine first-hand events, and their general formats resemble one another. Both are related to disciplining the life and ministry of the Church. However, when the first type deals with events, people are considered actors. It assumes that God's presence and the guidance of religious traditions are found through decisively engaging in events. When the second type deals with events, people are considered "patients," receivers of experience. It assumes that religious guidance and God's presence are discovered through meditatively participating in events. Each type takes as primary what the other takes as secondary.

Both of these disciplines are significant and useful in their own right. Pastors and congregations often achieve little in terms of their professed mission because they are not sufficiently careful in choosing, enacting, and learning from their strategies. Likewise, they often become detached from the realness of God's sovereignty when they do not regularly open themselves to experiencing his universal presence. Using both formats to record events and to hold seminars, Church groups could probably improve their personal knowledge of God's sovereign love in Christ and make their actions to be more loyal to their felt mission.

A third type would be a theological case method interested in both experience and action. Examples of the other types give clues toward this mixed type. Opportunities for experiential insights seemed to be added to the predominantly action-orientation in the examples of the first type. Late in his discussion, Glasse is concerned to ask "How is God at work in this case?"²⁰ even though his description of the process and his samples of written cases give no specific indication that he has this interest. Voelkel's description of process in Action Training Centers indicated that in certain situations theological insight was desired even though strategy choices and action predominated.²¹ Following Schuller's action-oriented case methodology, someone in the reported discussion added, "The raw basic question must be asked: 'Where does one see God in this whole endeavor?' 'How can one talk about the presence of the Holy in this situation?'"²²

Though the experience-oriented case method concentrates on theological and religious insights, its examples make some concessions to active participation. Dyer's "Laboratory in Theology" proceeds from insights into religious needs to assessment of how to respond with theological

²⁰Glasse, Parish, p. 103.

²¹Voelkel, "Theological Practice in Action Training," 116-20.

²²Schuller, "Case Method in Theological Education," 577.

resources.²³ When Calian concludes, he says "The case study approach offers in summary, a method of analysis, a searching tool by which to identify theological issues and possibly a subsequent program for action."²⁴

Two examples of the experience-oriented case method point toward our third type. In Trutter's descriptions and exemplifications of his process, we are given glimpses into an intimate relation between action and theological insight.²⁵ The other suggestive example comes from Walter Burghardt.

Theology asks questions, hard questions; asks questions of the data, of the experience. What does the experience say about God and man-- what does the data mean? On what grounds? How does this experience fit with the broader Catholic experience? How valid is it? If valid, how abiding, how enduring?²⁶

Burghardt seems to suggest the usual experience-oriented study of events, which searches for religious or theological insights. This changes when he shares the presuppositions and interests meant to be embodied when someone searches experiences. For him theology is intimately linked with

...leitourgia...public service on two levels: service offered to God and service given to

²³Dyer, "The Laboratory in Theology," 265.

²⁴Calian, "Case Study Materials and Seminary Teaching," 140, my emphasis.

²⁵Trutter, "Theologizing in Field Education," 29-33.

²⁶Walter J. Burghardt, "Theology: The Search for God and Man," Theological Education, IX (Winter 1973), 85.

man. This is the twin service that stimulates the theological search; this is the twin service that culminates it.²⁷

Here the search for theological insight turns not to experiences where we are mainly passive, but turns to experiences to see how well we are worshipping God and serving people. Likewise, insight guides further activity towards its fulfillment in worship and service, which again provides a field for further insights.

We again see parallels to the Biblical wisdom traditions. Gerhard von Rad finds that apparently trivial insights into understanding and relating to reality were closely related to basic theological principles that wisdom asserted. Based upon an experiential trust in Yahweh and his active ordering of reality, the wise man attempted to live and to think in partnership with Yahweh.²⁸ As such he was also engaged in "finding the right way of looking at things in the midst of ambiguous phenomena and occurrences, and of doing what is right in the sight of God."²⁹

Though God is sovereignly independent of life, he is present to all life. His signs are open for both interpretation and response.³⁰ Our encounters with personal and social realities profess various faiths which are inter-

²⁷Ibid. ²⁸Rad, Wisdom in Israel, pp. 69, 307-08.

²⁹Ibid., p. 250.

³⁰Calian, "Case Study Materials and Seminary Teaching," 137; Richard, "The Existing Malaise in the Theologizing of Field Experience," 69; and H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), passim.

twined with our participation in God's Kingdom. A theological case method should ultimately strive for clarity concerning the active relations of people and other finite factors. It should also strive for clarity concerning how God interacts with us through our finite experiences.

Burghardt's convictions about where and how theology serves very much resembles how H. Richard Niebuhr uses theology to serve faith as trust and loyalty. They are also relevant to Niebuhr's definition of the Purpose of Church and ministry--"to increase among men the love of God and neighbor." Case methodology could make Niebuhr's insights more accessible and usable. Niebuhr's expansive sensitivity to action and experience before God could make case methodology more appropriate for the life of the Church as a Gospel-professing community.

"THE SYNERGISTS:"

A GROUP USING THEOLOGICAL CASE STUDY TO WORK WITH GOD

In this lights, I propose another type of group which would use a case methodology. "The Synergists" would be a fellowship seeking to love God--to be called according to his sovereign purposes that he may work with (synergeo) them for his good in all things.³¹ Congregational members could support each other's conscientious professing--carefully living God's contemporary reconciliation of all

³¹See Romans 8:28 and also 12:1-2.

things in Christ. In this laboratory setting, people would practice a sensitivity to how their actions and their experiences point to the active presence of God. They would discipline themselves both to receive and to respond to their experiences as being a part of God's reality.

The heart of the Synergists' efforts would very much resemble Glasse's three-fold process--event, case, and conference. This has been adapted to include an experience-orientation and to incorporate Niebuhr's insights about the interpretation/response pattern. The Gospel-Professing Event is presupposed by the Synergists' sessions. It provides a pattern whereby to understand and guide our relationships so that we look for and respond to God's contemporary presence.

I. Finding one's place in responsive relations

1. Realize that something is eliciting a response.
2. Understandingly discern the situation as seen from the standpoint of others involved.
3. Find and accept your own part of the responsive relation.

II. Preparation for response

4. Interpret--heighten your awareness, identify, compare, analyze, and relate so as to find meaning of things in a larger whole in which we participate. What is happening around us? What is God doing?
5. Consider possible responses and anticipate replies (objections, confirmations, corrections) among a community of beings with continuous dimensions. Included in these replies is God's action in all actions--his rule hidden in manifold

activities, but visible to the discerning.

6. Choose a fitting response. Attempt to stand in the presence of God as you stand in the presence of this individual event.

III. Enacting the responsive relation (7. Response/replies)

IV. Reflection (usable feedback)

8. Recount the details of the responsive interaction.
9. Reinterpret the following the response. Seek the central symbols and images which reveal the integrity of the event and the encompassing stories of trust and loyalty that operated in the experience of response/reply.
10. Draw conclusions -about the benefits of your response according to its central image and according to its spreading effects;
-about the destructiveness of your response (How much did it "increase love," further relations which realize the participants' potential of goodness for each other? Does it fit into the context of God's universal, eternal, life-giving action?) Reassess "what we are doing."
-about the sense of God's sovereign presence and power in the total event. Reassess "what God is doing" in relation to Christian traditions and especially in relation to the reconciliation he accomplished in Jesus Christ.

Our written case, as others, would consider events with the case perspective and, according to the following format, would distil the material into written reports about one or two pages long.

- (a) Background. From Stage I, summarize when and how you realized your involvement and the factors that determined your involvement. From Stage II, describe your personal desires and anticipations regarding the situation.

- (b) Description. From steps 7 and 8, report how you responded and the reply that you experienced.
- (c) Reinterpretation. Discern the larger meaningful patterns from step 9.
- (d) Drawing conclusions. -about the benefits and harm related to your response.
 -about God's participation in the total event and any traditional parallels that come to mind (Creator, Limiter, Governor, etc)
 -about possible directions for future events and signs to watch for
 -about areas where group discussion is desired.

Weekly case workshops would be held to develop a group perspective about a distributed case. The leader (initially an outside resource or the pastor and later a group member) guides the process and keeps the group on track. The members will have received advance copies of the case. They will have written a personal response which will prompt their discussion and can be given to the presenter.

For 5 minutes clarify the information found in (a) and (b) of the written case

For 20 minutes, do the reinterpretation, as parallel to (c) of the written case. The group attempts to enter the event and make its dynamics their own without drawing conclusions. The presenter should not defend

his participation in the event of his written case nor dominate this step in any way. He may, like others, check out his understanding of another's analysis. Also he may briefly share additional insights about the experience which are prompted by others' astute observations.

For 15 minutes, draw conclusions as parallel to (d) of the written case. Again the group draws conclusions from its indirect experience of the event. Moreover, the presenter of the case again refrains from challenging the group's conclusions, but checks others' conclusions and shares additional conclusions.

For 10 minutes, the presenter reacts concerning the help and limits of the group's discussion and reflects on additional insights gained during the session.

In other ways the Synergists' sessions would resemble those of the "Ready Fellowship." Thus, opportunities could be taken for prayer, spontaneous worship, creative expressions, and evaluations. In the following proposal of an approximately 90-minute agenda, these matters and the case-related items are included.

- Prayers related to individual concerns and to a desire to work with God's presence in our lives
- Clarify the case's information
- Reinterpret the dynamics of the case
- Conclusions [and creative portrayals of same]

- Presenter's reaction and reflection
- Evaluation of the session
- Business related to the next session and the intervening week
- Prayers: silent meditations on significant insights and conversational prayers related to the sessions experiences
- Adjournment

As with the "Readfyl" Fellowship, the pastor would carefully recruit a small pilot group of fixed duration, probably a thirteen week quarter. An existing group might be willing to use this format. In various ways, an invitation like the following could be issued. "A new quarterly group, the Synergists, is being offered. The pastor will hold an organizational meeting [date, time, place]. It is hoped that the participants will become more open and responsive to the way God works with our lives (synergism). Thus, the group's activities will involve careful interpretation of selected first-hand experiences. All interested persons are invited to attend the organizational meeting."

At the organizational meeting, the pastor would seek to inform and to develop interest in the project. Sample agendas detailing the threefold process would be present. The pastor would draw out the hopes and expectations that had been raised in the attenders' minds concerning the proposed group. One could do a brief homiletical treatment on Luke 12:54-56 and Matthew 6. In the first text, Jesus uses

our skilled discernment in trivial matters to convict of us willful blindness in not discerning ourselves before God. Throughout Matthew 6, Jesus teaches us to respond to God's reality which is hidden in every experience and action--"to seek the Kingdom first" in order to take care of all our real needs.

Seven to ten mature participants would be recommendable. Commitments would be asked for thirteen weekly sessions lasting about ninety minutes each and for regular periods of individual meditation/study sufficient to write two cases and to be ready to discuss the cases presented weekly. Each person would write and distribute two cases, of which at least one would be presented in a session. One case is to be basically non-related to the corporate life of their congregation, and the other is to be somehow related.

One would be frank about the work to be done, but would relate it to the audience's desire for fellowship and for pioneering discipleship in the congregation. The pastor and interested persons would establish a weekly meeting time which includes most of the interested people. Then, the pastor would orient the committed group to the basic presuppositions and expectations. He or she should introduce the "Professing Event," the written case, and the case conference such that the group members begin to think in those terms.

Each person's first presentation of a case is scheduled. The pastor takes the first date and distributes his written case. Leaving the last session for evaluation, the group can later fill any openings in the schedule. A case to be presented one week would be distributed at the previous weekly session. During the week, the pastor could be available to assist in writing the cases.

In summary, a group called the Synergists is proposed. Presupposing H. Richard Niebuhr's interpretation/response pattern, the group could consider first-hand events with a theological case methodology which is interested in both action and insightful experience. The group supports each person as he/she receives the signs of God's presence and struggles to work with God's presence such that he/she professes the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the sessions' experiences accumulate, the whole group should also become bound together by their increased love for each other and for God who moves through all their lives. In such a group, the pastor could equip congregational members to own their share of the community which professes Jesus Christ with its life.

DISCIPLINING THE CORPORATE CHURCH TO BE A
GOSPEL-PROFESSING COMMUNITY

Quite simply, we have been concerned with how the Church embodies a faith in God whom we know through Jesus Christ. More specifically, the Church explicitly and perhaps functionally professes the Gospel. It tries to center its trusts and loyalties on the proclamation that God's reconciliation in Christ is the sovereign reality which stands over against this obvious reality. Our strategies have intended to facilitate members' participation in this living process by turning their attention to God's presence to which traditions and contemporary experiences may give witness.

Sustained opportunities for members to participate in these strategies should have some beneficial effects on the congregation's corporate life. This is particularly true if congregational decision-makers participate and if the group's insights are conscientiously contributed to congregational worship and to the Church's other educational endeavors (especially including membership training). Further application of this perspective to the congregations' corporate life may be complex in practice. For there are complex interactions involved in the relation between the traditional witnesses and the contemporary corporate life and involved in the relation between corporate insights and

responses related to experienced events. However, corporate application is not different in principle from what we have already tried.

In principle, complex interactions produce a congregational entity. This entity has discernible relationships with various traditional understandings of what and how the Church professes. Likewise, interactions result in a corporate response to internal and external events. That is to say that the communal interactions of the congregation have received and are professing a certain faith--an orientation of trust and loyalty toward the reality of God and world in relation. This orientation is embodied in the way we together see things, in the way we identify ourselves together, and in the way we corporately act.

Ellis Nelson rightly says, "The congregation, then, is a school of faith. All that the congregation does is both a means of communicating the faith and a subject of investigation."³² Our functionally professed faith can be examined in terms of its results and in terms of its relation to our awareness of God's presence. Relationships to the traditional witnesses and resulting responses to contemporary events are to a certain extent visible in a congregation's official structures. We can check the

³²C. Ellis Nelson, Where Faith Begins (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1967), p. 186.

adequacy of these official structures before our contemporary experience of the God of our fathers.

Nelson suggests a number of areas to check for faith statements made by corporate actions: worship patterns, concept of membership, budgets, building and physical surroundings, and administrative policies.³³ Though we rarely consider the faith that is embodied in these matters, they are excellent areas to examine. Practically speaking, the relative autonomy they achieve once they are established lends well to critical examination. Whether or not the congregation realizes it, these matters have kerygmatic force which may support or hinder the congregation's intentional proclamation of the good news. They identify and rank sacred realities which we trust to give us value and to which we have given our loyalty. They make a subtle, but powerful witness to the local congregation's members and to its surrounding community.

The pastor in his equipping the laity for their ministry should encourage strategic questions about which gospel the local congregation is proclaiming. The professing community must expect to translate its corporate actions into their faith equivalents. Similarly to scriptural exegesis or to case study, they should consider the structure, the meaningful pattern in an institutional aspect, and begin to ask how God is present in it.

³³Ibid., pp. 185-89.

For example, Lyle Schaller proposes a "program budget" which measures the ministering results of finances rather than the input into abstract categories. This program budget indicates the dollar amounts allocated to congregational care, evangelism, and witness/mission both beyond the parish and within the local area.³⁴ In such a way, the budget becomes a tool whereby to decide whether institutional maintenance serves the community's professing or whether references to ministry are a smoke screen for institutionalism. New perspectives on institutional structures could stimulate congregational consciences and interaction about the vocation of their congregation and about how to make institutional frameworks to serve that vocation.

Schaller applies this results-orientation to congregational programs. An annual evaluation of program goes beyond lists of activities, enrollments, and attendance. It asks about how involved people were affected by programs: whether programs served their needs, deepened their faith, equipped them for their own ministries, challenged them to vividly specific service, helped them to understand and cherish the Church's mission and their congregation's goals, etc.³⁵

³⁴Lyle E. Schaller, Parish Planning (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 48-49.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 72-75, 110-14, 152-60

Schaller uses the same results approach with regard to official policies. He points out that the informal customs and precedents function as institutional policies, but their elusive visibility hinders the process of making the institution serve the community of believers. In establishing visible policies, he recommends our focusing on the underlying principles which will guide decisions and continually testing these principles against the congregation's sense of its God-given purpose.³⁶

Basically, we see the principles of exegesis and case study being applied to explicit institutional patterns. One exegetes the intentions that are structurally present in the actual results of institutional structures. This is the critical, analytical side of the Church community's sensitivity to what it is professing.

Though this critical questioning is not simply the pastors' prerogative, they certainly need to adopt some such approach toward the program aspects which they directly execute. In their pastoral oversight, they constantly need to heighten congregational awareness about the intentions and the functional results of the congregation's program. They can both speak from their own perspective and raise the questions for others to consider. Through these conscientious examination, pastors become more aware of the

³⁶Ibid., pp. 143-44.

gospels we have been functionally professing--the gods whom we trust for our sense of worth and to whose glory we dedicate our efforts. We also become aware of how these gospels may deny the Gospel of Jesus Christ that gave us our community.³⁷

The corporate congregation also needs to engage the constructive task with regard to its professing the Gospel. It has heightened its awareness of "what we have been doing" and "what God is doing." Not only as individuals, but also as a congregation, it must also ask, "How do we respond? What is to be our unique mission at this time?"

Periodically, a congregation needs to reevaluate how it generally understands the Church as the world community professing the reality which God has accomplished in Jesus Christ. It also needs to reevaluate how it specifically understands its unique vocation. It needs to record a concrete, concise, and vivid consensus about how this congregation is called to embody Christ's Church here and now--an expression of the community's mind and spirit.³⁸

Let us propose a process to reach and describe a local consensus in communion with the Church of all times and places. The congregation could heighten its awareness concerning (1) Christian tradition concerning the people of God and (2) the existing gifts of the congregation. Then,

³⁷See Galatians 2:11-21.

³⁸See Schaller, Parish Planning, 93, 96.

(3) it reacquaints itself with the people to whom it has a ministry (members, local community, those beyond the local community). Finally, (4) the congregation would seek how these three intersect before God to define a contemporary mission in terms of their congregational identity and general goals.

The consensus-reaching process could be preceded by suggested scripture studies, sermons, position papers, evaluations of what the congregation does well, sociological summaries of the community, etc. The congregation tries to involve most of its members in small group discussions with trained leaders and with recorders. These groups would not seek consensus, but rather the expression, clarification, and record of the rich insights in the congregation. However, the recorder would indicate matters and degrees of agreement that naturally emerged in the group.

Leaders and recorders would bring their records and experiences together where they try to identify the trends of consensus and divergence that are emerging within the congregation. They concisely define areas of consensus where Christian tradition, the congregation's gifts, and its mission field come together to define their mission before God and to define related general goals. At a congregational meeting, the results are presented for the members to clarify their understanding of alternate purposes and to rank their appropriateness for the congregation. The

resulting choice constitutes the congregational covenant. An editorial committee rewrites the chosen mission as clearly and vividly as possibly and makes it public. Annually, the congregation should review the appropriateness of their defined theme and revise the general goals.

The congregation also needs to adopt some way in which to implement their discovered sense of identity before God and to realize their general goals. An appropriate means is "Management by Objectives and Self-Control," which was introduced by Peter Drucker in 1954.³⁹ The administrative body of the congregation submits the mission statement to a program council, which would coordinate the planning of program. This council distributes the mission statement and divides the general goals among existing and proposed program bodies. In terms of the congregation's central mission and in relation to the work of other program bodies, each program body restates its formal job description--its purposes, field of operation, and organizational location.

Annually, each program body considers what is possible in terms of its actualizing the congregation's mission. To the council, it proposes general goals, specific objectives, program, a time table for achievement of objectives, and a timetable and strategy for continuous

³⁹Speed Leas, "Management by Objectives in the Church," Christian Ministry, IV (November 1973), 9.

evaluation by which it can report and correct itself.⁴⁰

The Council consults with each committee to see whether its objectives are appropriate to the congregation's central mission. The program council also coordinates the proposals into a proposal for the year's program, including budget information. This plan would be submitted to the administrative body for its revision, adoption, and assignment of responsibilities.

Having completed these measures, the congregation's members can anticipate a program which they helped to shape. The program bodies will have guidelines which should have the consent and interest of the congregation. They can proceed to use management by objectives to implement the scheduled aspects of their program: setting targets, mobilizing resources, additional scheduling, facilitating scheduled evaluations (especially among those served by programs), making reports, and adapting to negative feedback.⁴¹

More importantly, the congregation should possess a program which intimately reflects how it will profess the reconciliations which its members are experiencing in Christ. The intimate interaction between the mission and

⁴⁰See Schaller, Parish Planning, pp. 107-08, 120-23; his "Principles in Congregational Self-Evaluation," Christian Ministry, IV (January 1973), 22-23; and "An Interview with Lyle E. Schaller," Christian Ministry, III (May 1972), 36.

⁴¹Schaller, Parish Planning, p. 124.

program is built-in critically through constant evaluative reports. That interaction could be built-in constructively if official bodies budget a third of their time to study tradition and contemporary analysis in relation to their mission.⁴² Relating evaluative reports to purpose, goals, and objectives, the program bodies and the program council could give the congregation a meaningful and useful annual report which related achievements to the chosen mission.⁴³ Responding to this report, the administrative body and members at large could give thanks for significant achievements and repent for the shortcomings needing different approaches.⁴⁴

The pastors' position as pastoral administrator, director, or overseer of the Gospel-professing community takes on great significance within this framework. They have great opportunities to stimulate the professing communities consensus before God. They can use their widespread contacts to anticipate⁴⁵ and to give voice to the communities' consciousness of themselves before God and before God's world. Worship and pastor-led study groups are obvious examples where pastors can have tremendous influence if they can lead the communities in interpreting their

⁴²Nelson, Where Faith Begins, p. 196.

⁴³See Schaller, Parish Planning, p. 108.

⁴⁴See Speed Leas, "The Uniqueness of the Church as a Management System," Christian Ministry, III (May 1972), 10.

⁴⁵"An Interview with Lyle E. Schaller," 37.

contemporary experience of traditional Christian witnesses. These and other contacts can contribute to the congregations' choices of responsive missions. When the congregation's mission covenant and yearly goals are based on its consensus before God, the pastor's administrative framework is greatly clarified.⁴⁶

The pastor models a responsive sensitivity to contemporary interaction among God, Church, and world. As such he/she models a sensitivity in congregational leadership which affects how that leadership implements programs and formulates new plans. He/she helps various bodies to keep the congregation's chosen mission before themselves and supports them in finding the skills and resources to institute and to implement their portion of the congregational mission. He/she models an awareness which constantly evaluates the meaning of institutional structures and community experiences so that the corporate community may discern and be responsive to God's loyal presence in the gifts and needs of people.

In line with our thesis that the Church is a Gospel-professing community, we have described a multi-faceted discipline directed toward the congregations' corporate professing. Through it, the congregation can become sensi-

⁴⁶James L. Lowery, "Pastor/Manager/Administrator," Christian Ministry, III (September 1972), 23 and 25.

tive to what it corporately professes and can constructively receive and embody God's vocation for their unique ministry of reconciliation. This discipline also facilitates the pastors' position as pastoral overseer in the Gospel-professing community.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

This study began with the recent problem of confusion about the nature of the Church and its pastoral ministry. That problem turned out to be part of a persistently modern perplexity. Finally, the problem was seen in the context of a radically secularizing era which tends to reduce the Church and other human structures to their obvious aspects.

We first treated the Church and the pastoral role as mainly organizational phenomena which could be clarified by secular parallels found in sociological and managerial analyses. Then with the help of H. Richard Niebuhr, we took seriously the Church's claim to represent a supernatural reality. These claims proved to be illuminating about supposedly secular communities and the Church's relation to them.

The Church is a community, a body of people which depends upon a dynamically common mind and spirit. It is a faith-professing community whose members, orientation, and institutional structures are to be determined by its central object of trust and loyalty. It is a religious community which explicitly professes faith in a central divine reality which is other than our obvious reality. Finally, it is a Gospel-professing community whose mind, institutional

structures, and actions toward the world are being filled by the good news that our sovereign God is accomplishing reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

In the Church's professing community, pastors have a unique place of leadership, which can best be described by "pastoral oversight" or similar terms. As in voluntary associations, their leadership is "pastoral," in the sense of being supportive and enabling of an emerging consensus. Yet, they are also significant overseers of the professing community. For they continually direct the community to orient their consensus to the primacy of God's sovereignty, the authority which stands over both pastor and community. Finally, they coordinate the Gospel-professing community to implement its common mind before God in fitting institutional structures and procedures.

For pastors and congregations, we found some strategies which are in keeping with the Church's being a Gospel-professing community. These strategies were kerygmatic exegesis of traditions, theological case study, analysis of congregational life according to its resulting ministries, and a "Management by Objectives" adapted to the Church. These strategies and others adopted in the same light can strengthen the Church as a Gospel-professing community and can provide bases for pastors to take their positions of pastoral oversight with the community.

The Gospel-professing community signifies a corporate attempt to respond to God's vividly real presence which is hidden in our everyday world. Though the community is often at odds with the false autonomy of human history and structures, it also watches them with appreciation and anticipation. For it wishes everyone to profess the occasions where the One known by the names Yahweh Elohim or Jesus Christ impinges upon everyday reality with judgement and grace. The pastors' position of pastoral oversight in the professing congregation has been instructed by all the traditional figures who enabled the people of God to see and to consent to God's sovereignty and who then shepherded the community's structures to keep it true to its vision. In this framework, one cannot help but wonder whether our present confusion is God's prelude to giving us a greater awareness and a wider service.

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